eaturing

Preparing for Beijing

The 4th UN World Conference on Women

Women in the World

7/1995

Echoes

ustice, peace & creation news

Echoes From Elsewhere

An Introduction To Echoes Magazine In Reactions, Facts and Issues From All Over The World

US Pentecostals repent 'sin of racism' and end church split

By Patricia Lefevere

New York, 25 October (ENI)—Almost 50 years of racial division between America's Black and white Pentecostals formally ended last week when the all-White Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) voted unanimously to disband during a bi-racial conference of 200 Pentecostal Partners in Memphis, Tennessee.

A new organisation has been established to promote cooperation between all of America's 18 million Pentecostal Christians. The revolutionary change from segregation to a deliberately anti-racist stance is also expected to be an example for the world's Pentecostal community.

The new group's first act of business was the adoption of an 11-point "Racial Reconciliation Manifesto", calling on the churches to commit themselves to a racial reconciliation strategy for the 21st century.

Among its tenets is the commitment to oppose all forms of personal and institutional racism, to work for "genuine and visible" Christian unity, to denounce the "sin of racism", to support and encourage those seeking change and to leave "our comfort zones, lay aside our warring, racial allegiances, respecting the full humanity of all..."

"It will take a while to get racial reconciliation going on the local level; success will depend on the creativity of our leadership," said Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, associate professor of church history and ecumenics at Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California and a co-author of the manifesto. As an example, he pointed to an effort by the Assemblies of God Home Mission department to recruit Black preachers to go into urban areas of 39 cities.

"We need to move beyond Blacks and Whites, and look for growth among Hispanics and Asians," Robeck said.

Robeck hoped that the historic move would have its effect on worldwide Pentecostalism, whose membership is variously estimated at between 350 and 450 million. Pentecostals claim to be the second largest group in Christendom after Roman Catholics.

Women's Peace Train: Helsinki-Beijing '95

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is organizing a PEACE TRAIN which will originate in Helsinki, Finland, the site of the WILPF Congress, "WILPF: Eighty Years and Beyond" in August 1995.

The history of WILPF began with women crossing borders to advocate for peace, co-operation, justice and freedom. In 1915, more than one thousand women from 12 countries crossed the borders of their warring countries to meet together in The Hague, The Netherlands. They reached out to their "enemy sisters" in order to work together for peace.

Eight decades after that historic "crossing of borders", WILPF will again organize a "crossing of borders" for peace, development and equality.

The PEACE TRAIN will begin its 22 day journey on 7 August 1995 and travel through Eastern Europe and Asia, making its way to Beijing for the NGO Forum 95 and the World Conference on Women. It will be composed of at least 200 women participants from all parts of the world who are actively engaged in work on peace and justice issues.

Along the route to Beijing, the Peace Train will make stop-overs in St. Petersburg (Russia), Kiev (Ukraine), Bucharest (Rumania), Sofia (Bulgaria), Istanbul (Turkey), Odessa (Ukraine), Alma Ata (Kazakhstan) and Urumchi (China).

At each stop-over, activities and round-table discussions are being planned with local women's organizations. Through workshops and field trips the Peace Train's participants will have the opportunity to meet local women and learn about their situation, their struggles, their culture, their hopes and aspirations. In addition, numerous skill-building sessions on mediation, conflict resolution, community organizing and NGO/grass-roots organizational development will be held.

Not all will be work. Time is set aside to share stories, make music and friends as the Peace Train travels to its destination.

A special feature of the Peace Train will be its focus on youth, the activists of the future. A structured course is being offered for up to 40 women under age thirty. The course is aimed at providing a guided learning experience during the journey for young women involved in peace and justice issues.

The cost of the Peace Train journey, including round-trip air fare, accommodation, attendance at the WILPF Congress and part of the NGO Forum '95 in Beijing (30/08 to 10/09) is approximately US$ 4,000.

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E d i t o r i a l

Echoes
justice, peace and creation news

Echoes is an occasional publication of the World Council of Churches' Programme Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation.
It is intended to share information and insights on the concerns of the former WCC sub-units, now in a restructured form in the WCC.
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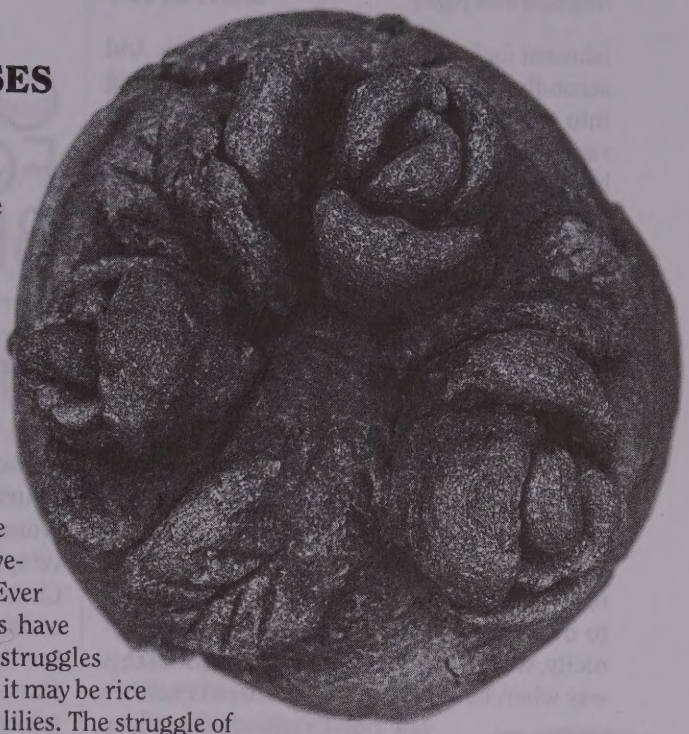
BREAD AND ROSES

by Margot Kässmann



At the Central Committee meeting 1985, in Buenos Aires, we had a session in which the WCC delegation to the conference in Nairobi marking the end of the UN decade for women reported. They began with a meditation on bread and roses and that famous song "Bread and Roses" of the women in the workers' movement in the United States. Ever since then bread and roses have been symbols for me of the struggles of women. In other cultures it may be rice and orchids or potatoes and lilies. The struggle of women worldwide is a struggle for justice, the right to a decent living: a roof above your head, food for your children, education. But women know that life in all its fullness is more than bread alone: it is joy, laughter, friendship, beauty. Wherever I had the privilege to visit in the years since 1983 on behalf of the WCC I have been overwhelmed by the strength of women to keep this sense of the "more" in life in the often terrible circumstances they have to cope with.

In my own country these months are full of memories of the end of the second world war fifty years ago: the liberation of Auschwitz in January, the destruction of Dresden in February, the capitulation of the German Reich on May 8, 1945. Amidst all the celebrations the special situation of women in those days is silenced. We are told about the soldiers, about warfare, prisoners of war. But what about the women who were forced to leave their homes in Poland? The women in the concentration camps? The women in the besieged city of Leningrad? The women in the caves in Okinawa? All those women and their struggle to protect their children and themselves, to protect life and dignity. Their history is not written, only known by oral tradition given from mother to daughter to grand-daughter.

As a schoolgirl I have been deeply moved by the story told by an old Jewish woman who came to our school. She had been a prisoner in a concentration camp. She told how in the midst of all the misery, of hunger and death and cold, a woman would wash her hair because she had fallen in love. How a woman would use the margarine she got — precious because of the desperately needed calories — to put it on her skin and "it would feel like the most expensive cosmetic you might have bought". Caring for beauty in the middle of misery, desperately longing not only for the bread but also for the roses.

Fifty years after World War II we realize that women are still victims of violence, often silence. It has been the courage of the Bosnian women to make rape in war a topic in the open. They gave many other women the possibility to speak about their experience: women in Manila, when it was destroyed in 1945. Comfort women in Korea and Japan. Women in Grosny in 1995. In Germany I find that many old women still do not dare to speak about their rape openly though, already as a child, I grew up with all those stories of the elder women in my family about rape during their flight. The silence might be due to a twofold reason: on the one hand there is the shame about what will be the German guilt forever in history for the holocaust and for the destruction of a continent's generation. Rape was often seen as the well deserved pun-

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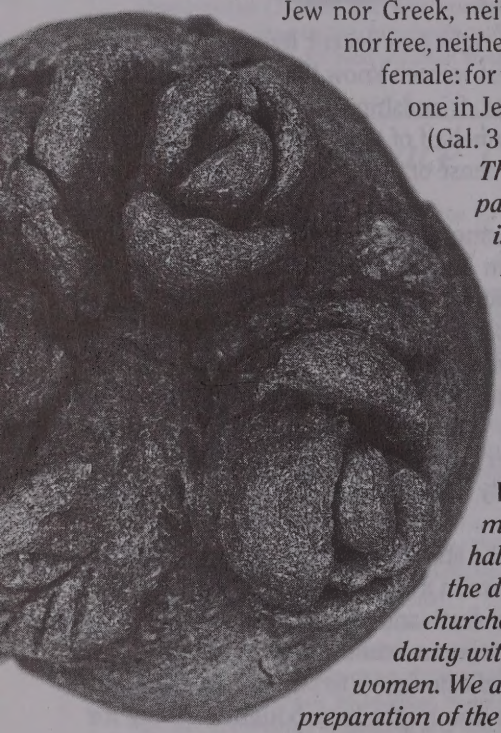
Editorial

ishment for believing in the Nazi ideology. And secondly, the telling of being raped would bring into the open the fact that the German army raped as well. Was it your husband, your brother, your son who raped women in Russia, women in Poland? Many women were not willing to face that. Women have to ask themselves if their silence protected injustice from being brought into the open. And they have to face the fact that women are not only victims but sometimes also the accomplice, even the perpetrator.

Today we try to learn that the key to reconciliation is remembering. It must be the basis for the future, because if we forget, those who died a violent death died in vain. The horror of the second world war in the struggle for life today is a constant reminder to search for ways to overcome the borders of gender, race, ethnicity, wealth and poverty. Jesus led us on this way when he said that in God there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female: for you are all one in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28).



The main part of this issue of ECHOES is reserved for articles concerning women. We are more than halfway in the decade of churches in solidarity with women. We are in preparation of the UN Women's Conference in Beijing in September. WE hope that the stories of women are no longer hidden from history if they are told and shared as in the articles in this volume. We long for it that women use their experience and their creativity to find new ways to overcome violence. That they cry out for bread and roses and that they bring to the ecumenical movement the outline for a theology of life. With all that women are at the centre of the work of Unit III. And more than that, they are at the heart of the ecumenical movement.

CRITICAL AREAS FOR ACTION AT BEIJING

An Introduction

The upcoming United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace in Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995, is the continuation of a global process for the advancement of women started in 1975. The Platform for Action to be adopted in Beijing aims to accelerate the removal of obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of public and private life, including economic and political decision making. It is an Agenda for Equality which seeks to safeguard women's human rights throughout the life cycle. It stresses the principle of shared responsibility and partnership between men and women as the basis for achieving equality, development and peace. It also seeks to integrate women's concerns into all areas of sustainable development so that women and men can work together.

Towards this end, critical areas for action are identified in the document Platform for Action. These areas are presented in the document with its strategic objectives and actions to be taken by all parts involved: the international community, governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. For the purpose of this article only the critical areas of concern and their strategic objectives are going to be highlighted.

A. *The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women*
Strategic objectives:
1. *Adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies which address the needs and efforts of women to overcome poverty;*
2. *Revise laws and administrative practices that limit disadvantaged women's access to economic resources;*
3. *Provide women with access to credit and savings;*
4. *Conduct research which enables women to overcome poverty.*

B. *Unequal access to and inadequate educational opportunities*
Strategic objectives:
1. *To ensure equal access to education;*
2. *To eradicate illiteracy among women world-wide by the year 2000;*
3. *To improve access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education;*
4. *To develop non-discriminatory education and training;*
5. *To allocate sufficient resources for educational reforms and monitor implementation.*

C. *Inequalities in health status and unequal access to and inadequate health care services*
Strategic objectives:
1. *Achieve universal access*

to appropriate affordable and quality health care and related services;
2. *Strengthen preventive programmes that address main threats to women's health;*
3. *Undertake multi-sectorial initiatives, sensitive to women's life situations, which address the HIV pandemic;*
4. *Promote research and information dissemination on women's health;*
5. *Increase resources for women's health.*

D. *Violence against women*
Strategic objectives:
1. *Take integrated measures to prevent and eradicate violence against women;*
2. *To study the causes of violence against women;*
3. *To adopt special measures to eliminate trafficking in women and to assist female victims of violence;*

E. *Effects of armed and other kinds of conflict on women*
Strategic objectives:
1. *Increase and strengthen women's participation in decision-making and leadership in conflict resolution;*
2. *Reduce and eliminate the availability of instruments of violence;*
3. *Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution;*
4. *Foster a culture of peace;*
5. *Provide assistance and training to refugee and displaced women.*

F. *Inequality on women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process itself*
Strategic objectives:
1. *To secure economic rights for women;*
2. *To take positive action to facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade;*
3. *Provide business services and access to markets, information and technology to low-income women;*
4. *Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks;*
5. *Eliminate occupational segregation and wage inequality;*
6. *Create a flexible work environment.*

G. *Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels*
Strategic objectives:
1. *To take special measures to ensure women's equal access to full participation in power structures and decision-making;*
2. *Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership;*

H. *Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women*
Strategic objectives:
1. *To create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies;*
2. *To generate and disseminate gender desegregated data and information for planning and evaluation;*
3. *To integrate women's concerns in all public policies.*

I. *Lack of awareness of, and commitment to, internationally and nationally recognized women's human rights*
Strategic objectives:
1. *To implement fully the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and other human rights instruments;*
2. *To ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law;*
3. *To achieve legal literacy;*

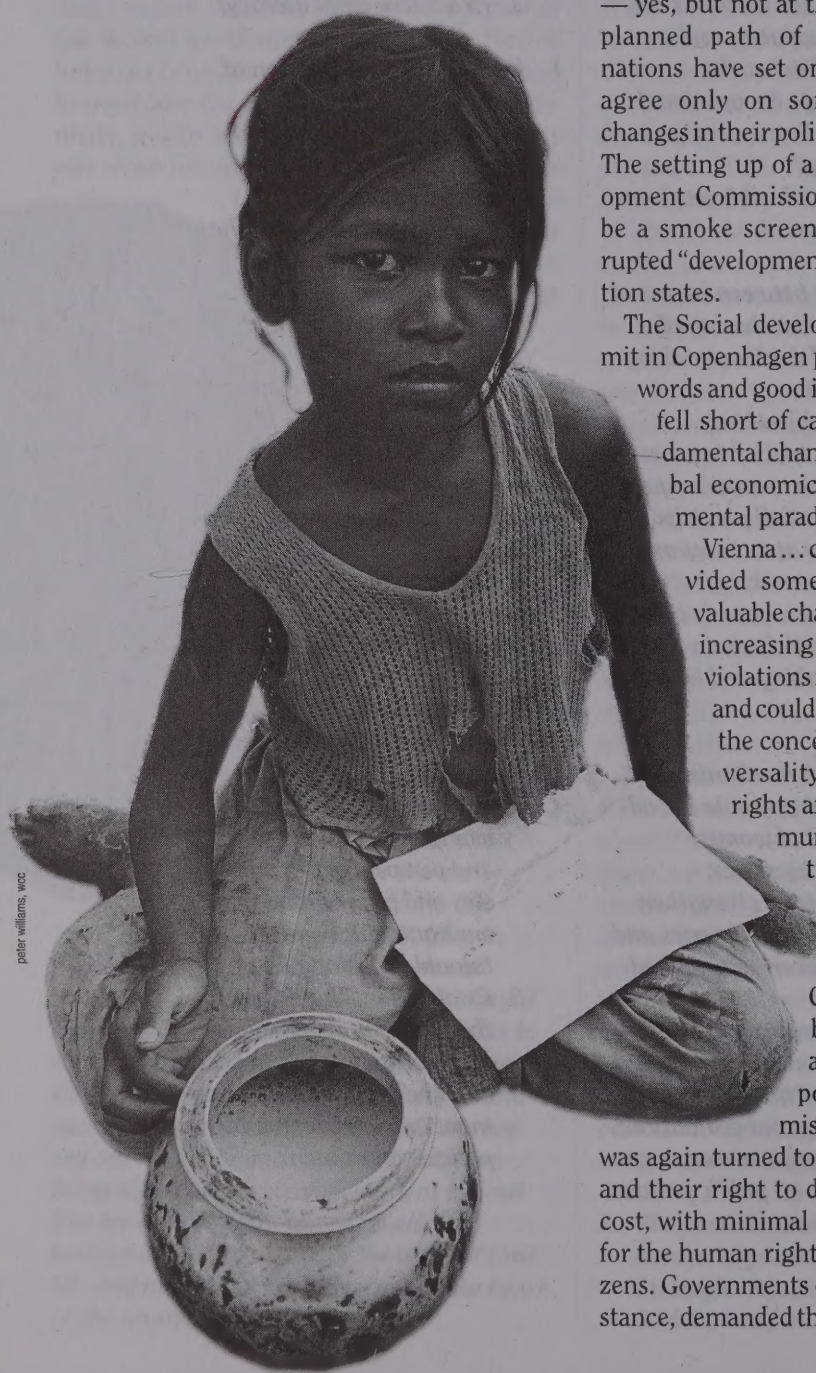
J. *Insufficient mobilization of mass media to promote women's positive contributions to society*
Strategic objectives:
1. *Increase and enhance the access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the mass media.*
2. *Promote a positive portrayal of women in the mass media.*

K. *Lack of adequate recognition and support of women's contribution to managing natural resources and safeguarding the environment*
Strategic objectives:
1. *Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels;*
2. *To ensure integration of women's needs, concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for environmental and sustainable development;*
3. *Establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to access the impact of development and environmental policies on women.*

BEIJING 1995: UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: IS IT TO BE ANOTHER MELA?*

by Aruna Gnanadason

If one is to view UN global gatherings from the perspective of governmental commitments and achievements, Rio... Vienna... Cairo... Copenhagen... have all been disappointing events. The environment, human rights and the issues surrounding the population and development debate — are all urgent issues of our times — and each is of particular concern to women. After years of planning and strategising — each event ended with the governments agreeing to policy documents because they were based on their right to "sustained economic growth" as the guiding principle on which all else will be measured.



peter williams, wcc

Rio ... environmental protection — yes, but not at the cost of the planned path of development nations have set on. They could agree only on some cosmetic changes in their policies and plans. The setting up of a Social Development Commission could also be a smoke screen for uninterrupted "development" goals of nation states.

The Social development Summit in Copenhagen produced nice words and good intensions but fell short of calling for fundamental changes in the global economic and developmental paradigm.

Vienna ... could have provided some strong and valuable challenges to the increasing human rights violations in many states and could have reviewed the concept of the universality of human rights affirming communal and collective rights over individual rights, on which the UN Charter is built. Once again the opportunity was missed. The focus was again turned to governments and their right to develop at any cost, with minimal consideration for the human rights of their citizens. Governments of Asia, for instance, demanded the "right to development" as more fundamental than human rights of citizens.

Cairo... was perhaps the greatest disappointment of them all. The campaign to reduce the debate into one issue — abortion rights (important and critical as the issue is in the context of the rights of women), on the pretext of affirming women's freedoms — denied the tremendous opportunity to challenge governments on the provision of "the quality of life" for all citizens. Governments like that of India, with a run away population growth, who should have been called to book and expected to reveal their commitment to real long term measures to improve the living conditions of its people's, went away unperturbed because the Cairo document is built on the inalienable right of governments to sustained development! The references to the empowerment of women, or to education of women, or even to women's reproductive rights, many governments could gladly acquiesce to as long as they were allowed the path of economic growth they had set out on — Cairo did not analyze whether this would in fact have an impact on control of population or on the real empowerment of women.

Parallel NGO events: making the difference

However, if these global events are to be assessed from the context of the impetus they have given to people's initiatives and movements which found a space and voice at the parallel NGO events, then indeed they can be counted as successful. The same can be said for the process after the UN Year for Women in 1975 and the Decade for Women and the world conferences it sponsored. The impact that this process has had on women's movements has been monumental. Women are now no longer prepared to sit back and allow their governments to plan policies or programmes for them. They have become active in the UN processes because they recognise how important these events are in challenging governments to act with conviction.

But then, how much further is Beijing going to take us, is the question. Are governments genuinely concerned about women's rights to a life of dignity, or their right to participation in the fullest sense? What does "empowerment" of women mean within a development paradigm which has systematically devalued the worth, the value, the contributions of women? How can one empower the millions of women who do not seem to have the right to survive? Is Beijing going to another mela, when governments will once again agree to lofty but meaningless statements because they do not have the political will to transform structures of injustice on which their policies are built? How is Beijing going to respond to the demands of women?

The women's movement: a movement of hope.

The women's movement which grows around the world, is indeed a movement of hope and courage. There can be no question that the mobilisation of women's voices around the world has been remarkable — it has reached a struggling peasant woman in a remote village in Zambia and a woman scientist in Bonn. It has spoken to the victim of rape in Canada as it has to a woman journalist who experiences daily battering by her husband in Nairobi. It has taken as seriously the struggles of women of the Chiapas nation in Mexico as it has taken the everyday experiences of violence that women in Fiji live with. It has campaigned against dowry related murders in different parts of India as it has stood with Dalit women in their challenge to the rape and assault they experience in the hands of upper caste men. It has been inspired by the feminist theological visions of women in South Korea or in USA or in Ghana as it has embraced the ecological visions of women in Mexico and the vision of a world without arms as articulated by women in Switzerland. It has absorbed discussions related to the impact of new economic policies of international monetary institutions and multi-national industries, and particularly the structural adjustment programme, on the lives of women, as it has engaged in long and intense reflections on the various unjust laws existing in many countries and the way in which they control the life and well being of women. The women's movement the world over

These are only small efforts in order to impact the gathering with our faith perspective and offer to women of the world an expression of our commitment and support. It will also be an attempt to carry back to the churches the voices of women in order to challenge them to solidarity during this Decade.
Beijing must make a difference in the lives of women...the 1995 UN Conference in Beijing cannot be another mela!

has become one of the most visible and vocal political movements in this century — of this there can be little doubt.

But if the impact of a movement is to be assessed by the "success" stories it can boast of, then we still have a long way to go as women. Perhaps what stands out most obviously is that in spite of all the efforts that have been made, violence committed on women continues and takes new forms — in fact women have identified a backlash, an increase in violence, because of their newly emerging strength and courage to resist. Within the very patriarchal world order, much of the violence against women goes unreported. What is even more tragic is that at every stage — from the family, to the police, to the law courts — the definition of "violence" ignores many forms of emotional, psychological and even physical abuse that women experience.

But if it were not for the women's movement, the tragic and scandalous statistics of violence would not have been exposed. The women's movement has created the space and the environment for women to speak out their pain. It has helped women recognise the structural roots of the violence they experience, in the apparent security of their homes — that what they go through on the personal level is to be understood in the context of society that is built on unjust power relations whether it be in the political, economic, social or cultural realm, and that women in all these contexts are the primary victims. It is also because of the women's movement and the organised voices of women that the issue of violence against women has now been identified as a human rights' issue and that the violence needs more than a few isolated responses.

The women's movement has also initiated a process of reflection on a new way of understanding political, economic and developmental realities in order to affirm that traditional interpretations of societal processes have not taken into account the well being of women, but also of children, Indigenous populations and other marginalised sections of society, but also all of creation. It has been assumed that the global development paradigm is in itself life-affirming and that women have to somehow be integrated into that system and be allowed to participate. The women's movement has provided a critique of the "development" model that has viewed "development" largely from the perspective of economic growth, to the detriment of large sections of people.

Beijing will be another opportunity for women to come together in the NGO Forum to re-affirm their united strength and articulate some of these commitments. It promises to be a space where women will articulate their many concerns. It will be a time of creativity and of challenge when women around the world will dis-

cover ways to be in solidarity with each other. This is indeed what women hope for — once again women will attempt to challenge their governments to action. There is yet hope for Beijing!

In some quarters there has been expressed a feeling that we must boycott the Beijing gathering in protest against the human rights' violations in China. Human rights' violations, where ever they exist, must not be condoned and must be protested. But then we have to ask ourselves whether boycotting the gathering is the solution — what of the eager expectations of millions of women in China and in the world who see this as an opportunity for their struggles to be voiced? The other dimension of this, is for us to ask ourselves why suddenly, there is such a lot of attention on human rights' violations in China alone. What of the track record of all the other countries where violations continue unabated? Is the targeting of China too closely linked with its refusal to bow down to trade pressures? We have to ask ourselves these questions before we take any drastic steps.

Where is the church?

Where are the churches in responding to the voices of women, is of course of central concern to us. The churches the globe over, have a long way to go — whether they are even concerned about Beijing and what this means to women is to be questioned. The theological challenges that women pose to the church are becoming visible — women are refusing to be the marginalised and silenced majority in the churches – and this poses new questions. Can Beijing be a catalyst for moving the churches into greater acts of solidarity? Can Beijing become an important milestone in the course of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women? These are the challenges that have encouraged the WCC to get actively involved in the processes leading up to Beijing and then in the event itself.

In cooperation with other global ecumenical organisations — including the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations, the World Student Christian Federation, World Federation of Methodist Women, World YWCA, World Vision International, and others. Under the banner of Ecumenical Women United, the WCC will participate with these organisations in joint programmes at Beijing. Panel discussions each day will focus on Women of Faith responding to some of the issues that the main conference will discuss.

Huan Ying, a Christian Women's hospitality centre will be set up with the support of Chinese Christian Women. Initial discussions in China with the National level Women's Committee of the China Christian Council (CCC), have been welcoming and encouraging. The CCC has been supportive and has offered us help in many ways. Rev. Gao Ying who is the pastor of one of the big congregations in Beijing and is the Executive Secretary of the CCC Women's Committee, will be our contact person.

But apart from that the WCC will hopefully also organise a series of workshops, on issues that the Decade has emphasised. They are to be on: Women and the economy: the impact of the debt crisis and structural adjustment on women; Women and health: the challenge of HIV AIDs; Women under racism: building a network of Sisters In Struggle against Racism and Sexism; Migrant women; Young Women for a Violence-free World; and issues relating to Women, Religion and Culture.

These are only small efforts in order to impact the gathering with our faith perspective and offer to women of the world an expression of our commitment and support. It will also be an attempt to carry back to the churches the voices of women in order to challenge them to solidarity during this Decade.

Beijing must make a difference in the lives of women...the 1995 UN Conference in Beijing cannot be another mela!

Aruna Gnanadason is executive secretary for the Women's Programme of Programme Unit III

** Mela is a Hindi word for a fair ground where people sell their wares. It is usually festive but can also be chaotic!*

About Summits and Pyramids

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF THE SOCIAL SUMMIT, HELD IN COPENHAGEN 1995

the studio

by Rob van Drimmelen

When I was in Copenhagen in March this year to attend the World Summit on Social Development, I found a postcard picturing nomads on camels in the desert against the backdrop of a scenery with pyramids. The text on the postcard said *Greetings from Copenhagen*. Given the cold, windy and snowy weather that reigned in Copenhagen during those days, I thought that this card was a good joke. However, upon further reflection, I realized that the picture was closer to the truth than it seemed at first sight. After all, the Social Summit was about "pyramids of sacrifice" — to quote the title of the famous book by Peter Berger. All over the world there are people who work under slave-labour conditions, building pyramids for their masters who live in luxury, who don't want to give up their privileges, and who use slave drivers, backed by economic, military and even religious power, to keep the oppressed in bondage. At the same time however, there were also examples of groups of people who have left the lands of pyramids in an exodus through the desert towards a land of promise. Although meant as a joke, the postcard did symbolize the reality of the Summit in Copenhagen.

Rowing boats

What to expect from the Summit where such a broad diversity of people tried to reach consensus on both the concept of, and the policies which would lead to, social development? One prerequisite for reaching a consensus was that too much analyses of the root causes for social crises should be avoided since such an exercise could easily lead to the identification of specific policies and actors which are responsible for these crises. Rather, the emphasis should be on general concepts and broad generalities which contain something for everybody.

In that sense, the Summit was a success. The Draft Declaration and the Draft Programme of Action contained beautiful words and laudable intentions. World leaders delivered passionate speeches about the need to eradicate poverty, fight unemployment, and promote social integration. But it was difficult to suppress the feeling that some of these leaders are like those rowing a boat: looking in one direction but, through their actions, actually steering the boat in the opposite way. Some leaders of the world's most powerful nations, like presidents Clinton and Yeltsin and prime minister Major, did not even bother to come to Copenhagen and sent their wife and/or deputy instead. "It is like playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark", commented Mahbub ul Haq, the special advisor to the United Nations' Development Programme.

Half full or half empty?

Like the personality and character of Hamlet has been subject to many interpretations, the results of the Social Summit will give rise to different exegeses. Some will be sceptical, others will be optimistic. In the end all depends on whether we consider the glass half empty or half full. What is in the glass?

For the first time, a major United Nations' conference adopted "commitments" (see box beside) as opposed to "principles" or "objectives", the standard formulation in previous declarations. For ecumenical observers, it is tempting to draw a comparison between the Ten Commitments of Copenhagen and the Ten Affirmations of Seoul which form the basis of the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Although the former is a secular document while the latter stems from a church-initiated process, both texts formulate their intentions in the form of

THE TEN COMMITMENTS

1 We commit ourselves to create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development.

2 We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.

3 We commit ourselves to promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work.

4 We commit ourselves to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, and on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

5 We commit ourselves to promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognizing and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and development.

6 We commit ourselves to promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the access of all to primary health care, making particular efforts to rectify inequalities relating to social conditions and without distinction as to race, national origin, gender, age or disability; respecting and promoting our common and particular cultures; striving to strengthen the role of culture in development; preserving the essential bases of people-centred sustainable development and contributing to the full development of human resources and to social development. The purpose of these activities is to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration.

7 We commit ourselves to accelerating the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries.

8 We commit ourselves to ensuring that when structural adjustment programmes are agreed to, they include social development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment and enhancing social integration.

9 We commit ourselves to increase significantly and/or utilize more efficiently the resources allocated to social development in order to achieve the goals of the Summit through national action and regional and international cooperation.

10 We commit ourselves to an improved and strengthened framework for international, regional and sub-regional cooperation for social development, in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations system, with broad participation of all sectors of civil society.

peter williams, wcc

commitments. Some of the issues that are addressed also overlap, e.g. poverty, human rights, racism, sexism, militarization, the environment, and respect for different cultures and minorities. The agendas of the ecumenical movement and the "secular oikumene" of the United Nations converge on important issues. This raises (again) the question what the role of the ecumenical movement in general, and the World Council of Churches in particular, should be vis-à-vis the United Nations.

The Declaration and the Programme of Action which resulted from the Summit, contain what is described as breakthrough language in United Nations' documents concerning a clear commitment by the international community to eradicate (rather than "diminish") absolute poverty; the need for structural adjustment programmes to be socially responsible; the recognition of unremunerated work; and the imperative of people's empowerment in the design and implementation of social-development policies.

Bretton Woods institutions

There was a consensus in Copenhagen that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank should change their policies. Structural adjustment programmes, that are required to obtain loans from these, so-called Bretton Woods institutions — named after the town where they were established — have disastrous effects on the poor. The summit insisted that, in the future, such programmes should include social-development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and enhancing social integration.

Concerning bilateral debt (between countries) and commercial debt (to private banks and companies), initiatives have been taken in the past to reduce the foreign debt burden of countries in the South. However, multilateral debt (e.g. to the Bretton Woods institutions) has so far been untouchable as the IMF and the World Bank maintain that such debt cannot be cancelled. Yet this multilateral debt burden weighs heavily on the shoulders of the most indebted Southern economies, especially those in Africa. It was therefore very significant that Copenhagen asked the international financial institutions to address this issue, and encouraged them to seek a durable solution to this increasing problem. It was also important that the Summit made a plea for greater cooperation between the United Nations — which operates on a one-country-one-vote system — and the IMF and the World Bank in which the economic strength of countries determines the number of votes they can cast.

A different concept of work

Almost unnoticed, but yet significant, was the Summit's call to acknowledge the social and economic importance and value of unremunerated work. Worldwide, most of this work in families and communities is done by women who often face the double burden of performing both remunerated and unremunerated work. Although economies would collapse without it, unremunerated work is hardly valued or recognized, nor is it counted in statistics. The Summit asked that unremunerated work be reflected in quantitative terms and that the very concept of productive work be broadened. If taken seriously, this could lead to an important change in paradigm as the wealth of a country or a community would no longer be expressed only in terms of the goods and services that are bought and sold, but would also include unwaged work that is indispensable for maintaining the social fabric of societies. It was awkward to hear some Southern countries object to this proposal by saying that there was a danger that they would suddenly look very rich if unpaid work is reflected in national accounts and that it would reduce their chances to qualify for foreign aid.

From commitment to action

Copenhagen did not see dramatic announcements, breakthroughs or other tangible means of gauging success. Much of the progress made at the Summit came in the form of conceptual breakthroughs, with discussions opening up on issues that had never been addressed in such a way by a United Nations' conference.

If there were real "winners" at the Summit, Africa and the least developed countries are among them. The Summit documents go further than any other international agreement by calling on world leaders to consider alleviating the onerous debt and debt-service burden connected with the "various types of debt", including multilateral debt, of the poorest and most indebted developing countries as a matter of priority.

The Summit urged countries to adopt a new approach to development. The new paradigm should be people-centred, focus on the poor, be gender sensitive, and ensure environmental sustainability. It must be based on democratic institutions — in government and civil society — which are accountable, transparent and efficient.

For these reasons, I would personally see the glass as half full rather than half empty. At the same time, much depends on the follow up. Although signed by the heads of State of many countries, the commitments made in Copenhagen are not legally binding nor can they be enforced. Yet the outcome of the Social Summit can become an instrument for the mobilization of sectors in civil society which can hold governments morally accountable to implement what was signed. If successful, this could be a first step of an exodus from the lands of pyramids to lands where human dignity is better respected.

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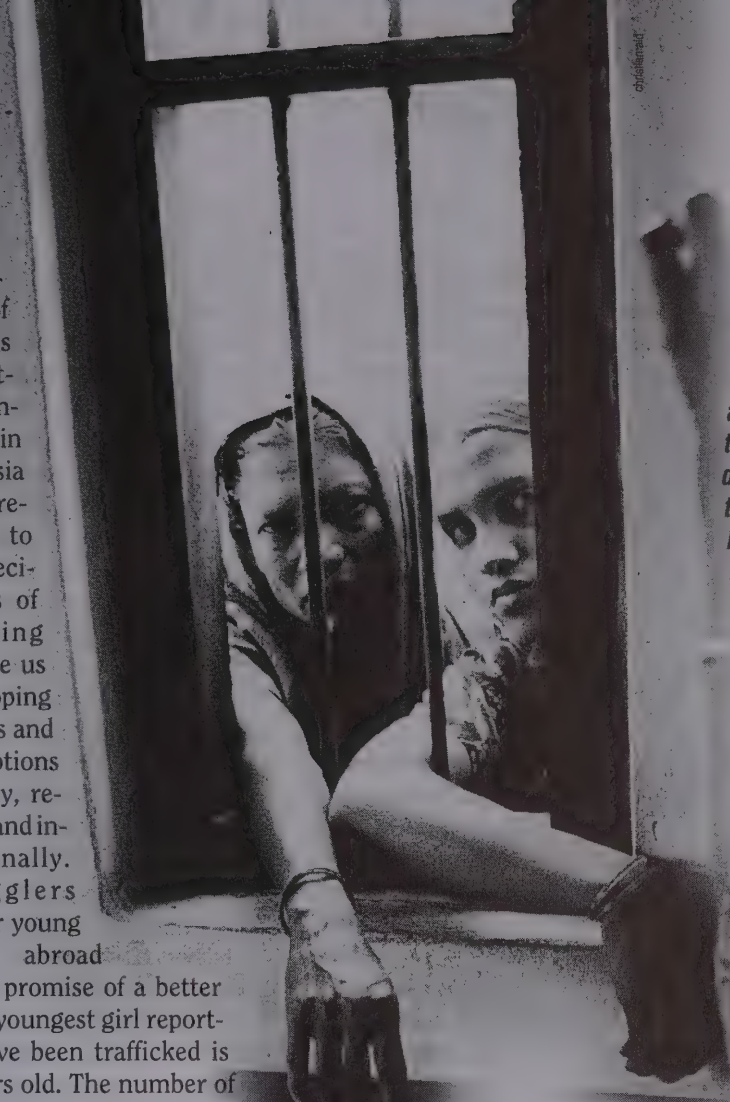
Copy of the report can be obtained from Unit III, ECOS team.



Trafficking of Bangladeshi Women

written by Chaumtoli Huq

Every month, 120 to 150 Bangladeshi women are trafficked to Pakistan and sold to brothels or individuals there to be turned into prostitutes. During the last ten years, an estimated 200,000 women have been trafficked. The number of women and children sold into sexual slavery and prostitution has reached global proportions. There have been reports of Bangladeshi women trafficked to countries of the Middle East, but I will focus on the trafficking of Bangladeshi women to Pakistan.

Trafficking of women is not limited to countries within South Asia nor is it restricted to Asia. Specific cases of trafficking will guide us in developing strategies and policy options nationally, regionally and internationally.

Smugglers lure poor young women abroad with the promise of a better life. The youngest girl reported to have been trafficked is nine years old. The number of very young women being trafficked is increasing because of the preference for virgins and the AIDS' scare. Smugglers take advantage of the economic vulnerability of women who, due to extreme poverty and economic disparities, are swayed by the promise of jobs. Sometimes, smugglers bribe women beforehand.

The following cases illustrate the ways by which women are trafficked and the transnational dimension of the issue.

Shamin Akhter was abducted near her home and taken by train to New Delhi. She was then taken to Karachi first by bus and then on foot. There she was sold to a man and resold to another after a year. Neelofa was a mill worker who was told by a female worker that she could earn more money working as a domestic helper in Bombay, India. From Chittagong she was taken to Jessore, then to India and Karachi where she ended up in a brothel. The brothel was raided later and Neelofa was charged with illegal entry into Pakistan. A group called Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) are helping Neelofa and Shamin.

Unfortunately, most of the trafficked women are never found. No one knows the whereabouts of a young girl named Fatima who escaped from her pimps and was placed in a foster home.

Not all the women who are trafficked are unmarried. There are cases of married women who were accompanied by their husbands (to their supposed destinations). But the husbands were beaten up and forced to leave their wives in the brothels.

Younger girls are often unaware that they are being trafficked because they are given by their parents to strangers whom they call "uncles" who then take them abroad. Parents are often unaware of the horror awaiting their daughters. They often see it as a temporary solution to their economic problems and expect their daughters back after a couple of years. One father was quoted as saying that because his daughter was not yet menstruating, she would forget about it. One would think that parents do not care for the welfare of their children. One father searched and rescued his daughter who was sold by her husband for $250.

Trafficking involves many actors. Not all smugglers are men, there

are also women involved. In the case of Neelofa, there were women intermediaries who may even be running their own networks. Male smugglers use female intermediaries because it is easier for them to get closer to the women-victims and their families because the latter are regarded as trustworthy. This is particularly true in a Muslim society like Bangladesh where contact between men and women is restricted. Twenty year old Parvin was a victim herself. She managed to escape but later accepted an offer to be a partner in the flesh trade. The lucrative nature of trafficking attracts both men and women into the trade. It is also a trade that is easy to get into because trafficking does not require capital investments. A woman is sold for $800 - $1.600 from which a pimp earns $20. Smugglers earn an average of $320 per month, which is big by Pakistani and Bangladeshi standards.

The network is made possible with the collaboration of the local police and marriage registrars who often perform fake marriages that would allow the women to be smuggled out without any documentation. "Husbands" of fake marriages pass off their "wives" to other men for profit. It is generally believed that smugglers are also able to traffic women across the border because border officials get the first choice among the women.

In Pakistan, pimps threaten Bangladeshi women with the provisions of the Zina Ordinance and Section 13 of the Hudood Ordinance to coerce them. These two laws prohibit adultery, fornication, rape and prostitution among illegal immigrants. According to the Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid, there are presently over 2,100 Bangladeshi women in various Pakistani jails. Jails are not strictly supervised, allowing the pimps to continue threatening the women. The women are often afraid to leave the jails or, if they eventually leave, they return to the brothels or to the sex trade. The Bangladeshi government claims that there are only 104 Bangladeshi women in jails throughout South Asia. Some of the women are in the Edhi centre, the largest refuge for Bangladeshi women.

The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others requires States to repatriate persons to their home country after an agreement has been reached with the State of destination. Women are required to prove their citizenship. Access to state assistance and repatriation is contingent on proof of citizenship based on passports and identification cards. Those with financial means are able to go home with the help of their families. Most of the women who have been trafficked are poor who must rely on State resources or donations from philanthropic organisations for their return fare. But many women are not willing to go back home because of the prospects in Bangladesh and their past. One woman said: "I do not want to go home where my eight cousins will kill me."

Both the Bangladeshi and Pakistani governments have been unresponsive to the problem of trafficking. In 1992, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States was quoted as saying: "I am not aware of any organised trafficking going on."

The number of very young women being trafficked is increasing because of the preference for virgins and the AIDS' scare.

peter williams, wcc

A woman is sold for $800 -$1.600 from which a pimp earns $20. Smugglers earn an average of $320 per month, which is big by Pakistani and Bangladeshi standards.

The issue reverberates at the national, regional and international level. Our strategies must be aimed at all levels. At the regional level, there is an unwillingness to disturb the status quo. Acknowledging the traffic in women would contradict claims of improvements made by the Bangladeshi and Pakistani governments which are both dependent on foreign aid.

Trafficking in women has been called a modern form of slavery. In 1992, 74 women and children to be sold in Pakistan were rescued from the cargo hold of a boat. They were bound and gagged. This incident proves the accuracy of calling "traffic in women" a form of slavery. Slavery is more sophisticated, more globalised and more technological than ever. Governments would open themselves to international scrutiny once they admit these injustices.

Khaleda Zia, prime minister of Bangladesh, had promised to take tough measures in fighting trafficking. In 1987, the Bangladeshi parliament passed a law imposing the death penalty for the crime of trafficking women, but so far only one person has been sentenced. The government also agreed to rehabilitate the women-victims. But it is easier for the government to deny that trafficking is more pervasive than is generally thought. Because women who have been victims of trafficking are regarded as "undeserving, fallen" women, it is much easier for the trafficking government to ignore the issue.

Strategies and policy options

Women must be given economic alternatives to make them less vulnerable to smugglers offering jobs. Export-oriented industries requiring female labour have provided some opportunities for the women. Workers have begun to organise unions to improve their working conditions. Yet the violence that women face is not solely due to poverty. Bangladeshi men also look for jobs abroad but do not face the same problems. Thus, in providing economic alternatives, one must also take into consideration the status of women in society which allows the commodification of their bodies. Economic justice is not only providing jobs but providing options.

The regional dimension of the problem requires South Asian countries to work in collaboration with other Asian nations. But this may be difficult for South Asian countries which have already strained relations (with others). Strategizing at the regional level may counter reaction to international pressure as Western encroachment (or interference). There is a tendency to combat issues like trafficking solely with international pressure, bypassing regional strategies.

We should not exclude the possibility of organising at the international level because Third World governments like the Bangladeshi and the Pakistani will give greater importance to an issue if the international press publicizes it. And the international press has been instrumental in raising awareness on the issue. Raising awareness on the issue may also help raise funds for local support groups willing to rehabilitate the victims.

The above recommendations are given to address the escalating severity of trafficking of women in order to provoke discussion and concerned action. Activities must be staged at all levels.

I would like to end my testimony with a quotation from Baby Moudad of the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad: "It takes an unusual amount of courage to track down the networks of trafficking. For involved in it are gangs and racketeers with connections at the highest level of national and international lords of the underworld." This quotation is not meant to discourage but to understand the need to be organised. This tribunal is a beginning and I hope that we will be able to network beyond the days we will be spending together.

Testimony given In The Court of Women II: ASIA TRIBUNAL ON WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS in Tokyo. This was one of the series of Public Hearings by the AWHRC and focused on the Traffic in Women and War Crimes Against Women, March 12, 1994.

Because women who have been victims of trafficking are regarded as "undeserving, fallen" women, it is much easier for the trafficking government to ignore the issue.

STATEMENT OF MAORI WOMEN

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

***delivered by Dame Mira Szaszy** (photo) to the United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Peoples Geneva, July 1994*

sally tagg, auckland

Chairperson Madame Daes, tena koe, sincere greetings to you. to all distinguished guests, the Working Group and "tangata whenua" (Indigenous nations) here present, "tena koutou katoa", greetings to you. It is an honour to be with you all.

I would like to report on the developments of the rights of self-determination for Maori women. The submission we have prepared states that in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Maori Declaration of Independence 1835 and the Treaty of Waitangi 1840 protect the right of self-determination for Maori. We too seek the recognition of this right in international human rights' law.

Maori women are currently seeking recognition by the New Zealand Government of our rights of self-determination as guaranteed in the Treaty of Waitangi.

However, the reason for our presence here, on behalf of our group of Maori Women of Aotearoa, has specifically to do with the derogation of human rights as experienced by Indigenous women. We therefore recommend that the draft Declaration be amended to include a strong statement on the rights of Indigenous women. Despite the claim in Article 43 that the rights and freedoms of Indigenous men and women are equally guaranteed, it is not, in fact, the reality in practise.

We know that women and men are not the same — we do not choose to be honorary men at any time to enjoy the fundamental human rights which are part of our cultural integrity.

What is patently missing from the draft Declaration is a statement about respect for the status of Indigenous women. It is assumed that women's rights are implicitly covered by general (male) rights. Issues of childbirth, fertility, spousal abuse, and sexual violence are of great and real concern to Indigenous women. Other concerns such as the derogation of political and cultural rights are experienced by women differently from men. The issues of concern to Indigenous women are often disregarded: sometimes intentionally and often unconsciously.

The Draft Declaration assumes that colonisation is an identical process for both women and men. It does not adequately address the differences in the experiences be-

tween the sexes. As Maori women, we are not blind to the oppression of Indigenous women, and we do not believe in the myth of equality.

There is an urgent need for gender relations to be addressed in Indigenous communities such as Aotearoa/New Zealand, because the tensions within obstruct the potential of Indigenous peoples. For instance, when Indigenous women become politically visible, there is a myth that they are taking something away from Indigenous men. There are links between patriarchal colonisation and its influence on colonised men, which have detrimental impacts upon gender relations between Indigenous men and women. The derogation of Maori constitutional rights in new Zealand, through colonisation, has caused a redefinition of masculinity and femininity within Maori society. Sexism is perpetrated by colonists and Indigenous men.

For some men, political derogation is seen as emasculation, and emasculation is seen as the ultimate evil, not political usurpation itself. Men justify their political antagonism toward Indigenous women by viewing female rights as the negation of men's political identity.

We advocate that the vulnerability of women and their children be urgently addressed —not only in times of war, but in their daily lives.

As Maori women, we represent over fifty percent of tangata whenua in Aotearoa, but our status, existence and needs have never been wholly addressed or legislated for in our country. In the eyes of Maori women, New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi affirmed the concept of self-determination. A failure to provide protection against the erosion of Maori women's political status is contrary to the articles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and contrary to any sense of justice for Maori women.

Maori women are currently seeking recognition by the New Zealand Government of our rights of self-determination as guaranteed in the Treaty of Waitangi. The combined effects of colonisation, and the lack of recognition of the women's role by Government agencies, has resulted in disempowerment of the women's role in our leadership, development, and decision-making structures. Successive Maori authorities, Maori development agencies and other government funded bodies such as the Maori Fisheries Commission promote a male bias in representation. There is a need for equality on a gender basis for these authorities and commissions in order to promote development for Maori women.

In conclusion, tena koutou katoa. Thank you, Madame Chairperson, and to the Indigenous nations — may the eternal creator watch over you.

There are links between patriarchal colonisation and its influence on colonised men, which have detrimental impacts upon gender relations between Indigenous men and women. The derogation of Maori constitutional rights in New Zealand, through colonisation, has caused a redefinition of masculinity and femininity within Maori society. Sexism is perpetrated by colonists and Indigenous men.

Polish

by Irena Bialokoz

We did not expect that the polluted air would infiltrate into our society along with the breeze of democracy and freedom. The signs of this "pollution" are already visible and many people are very surprised and unprepared for the new realities of capitalism. For the majority of people our present situation is not what they were fighting and striking for.

The first big problem which women (and men) are facing is the high rate of unemployment. People in the West might say "what's new about this?, this problem is universal nowadays". This might be true, but you should know that this problem did not exist in Poland before, and it is very hard to understand for people who want and need to work. The unemployment rate in 1993 was 14,3% — with more women than men affected, especially women in urban areas. A look at the job offers in the newspapers reveals that nearly all the jobs offered to women apply only to women under the age of 35. Not to mention the fact that they should be good looking and single — the employer does not wish to deal with maternity leaves and sick children.

Did it ever happen to you when you were getting order in your flat, that you threw away even the good things? It then took quite some time to realize the mistake you had made and that this new "order" was not as good as it was intended to be ... Somehow this situation describes the present reality in Poland after the "big democratic changes". It is especially true as far as women's problems are concerned. With the opening of our "windows" to the West there were a lot of expectations and hopes for a better, freer and happier life, but unfortunately the passing years of the new order cruelly refuted them.

The most adversely affected are the women in their forties; they are too young to retire and too old to find another job if they get fired—which occurs quite frequently now due to privatization and the reduction of jobs. You can imagine the situation of single mothers in the work market. They have no chance of finding employment. This is a new phenomenon since, in the past, single mothers used to enjoy many privileges and state support (mainly financial). Polish women in general like the idea of being independent, of having a monthly salary and acquiring qualifications for their professional life. Unemployment and age discrimination are therefore very frustrating. To this is added the very high fees for child care. Twelve percent of the women are forced to stay at home because child care would cost them more than what they would earn.

In the past, the working woman was able to continue or improve her education while working. It

was possible to attend university free of charge with the agreement of the employer. There was special fully paid leave to allow the completion of studies in the extra-mural (tuition) system. This possibility stills exists theoretically, but the extra-mural system is no longer free of charge. It has become quite expensive, and the employers are no longer interested in paying for the education of their staff. Non extra-mural universities are still free of charge as long as there is no semester repetition.

Two models for women are presented nowadays in our society: one is the business woman. She should be successful, wealthy, independent and possibly have a loving and caring family at the same time. This model is introduced by the mass-media, mainly some women's magazines. They encourage women to decide for themselves and to find their own place in the new capitalistic society. This message is only addressed to a small percentage of our society — educated and wealthy women.

The other — opposite — model, is the "Polish Mother", dedicated entirely and only to family, children, husband and housework. She is the guardian of the "family's happiness". This image of women in society is very much cherished and supported by the Catholic Church and was strongly promoted during the last year — the Year of the Family. There is nothing wrong with this option as long as it is only an option. The danger lies in the restriction of free choices. Natural family planning, lack of totally free access to inexpensive and efficient methods of birth control and the penalisation of abortion (for women and doctors, but not for the fathers of the aborted fetus) set very serious limits to the freedom of choice.

There is one more popular stereotype which can often be found in women and girl's magazines: the Barbie-doll personality. Life would be much easier for some men, if women were undemanding, nice, not too clever, humble, men-oriented and of course beautiful and funny! But the majority of Polish women are aware of the dangers of rooting such stereotypes in society and to this they oppose either the modern life style or the values of religious tradition.

I think that our women have a big dose of common sense and the strength to recognise and fight against the unjust marginalisation brought about by the economic and political changes. In the midst of the euphoria of change we will not forget that old does not necessarily equal bad and that new does not necessarily equal good. We women are not going to forget about the privileges and rights we used to have and are not willing to give them up even if this means challenging the State or the Church.

Oppressive state policies towards women have had as a consequence the emergence of feminist organisations in the political arena. These organisations are helping to raise awareness regarding the loss of women's rights. Let us hope that they will soon no longer be needed and that the world will understand that there can be no happiness when women are suffering and that the only way out is through understanding, empathy, solidarity and love for one another.

Ms Irena Bialokoz is a medical doctor in Bialystok in Eastern Poland. She belongs to the Polish Orthodox Church and is currently member of WCC Unit IV Commission. She has participated in many WCC related activities in the past years, most recently in the youth delegation to the UN International Conference on Population and Development.

... the business woman. She should be successful, wealthy, independent and possibly have a loving and caring family at the same time ...

THE BALLY-CASTLE DECLA-RATION

Who are we?
We are a communion of people
from diverse places and circumstances
gathered to affirm the dignity and worth of all people

We are women
bloodied and proud, weeping and joyous
loving and searching, stumbling and strong

We are sisters
burdened and striving, yearning and bold
fearing and laughing, tender and torn

We are a communion of people
and we are coming out of the shadows.

OUR VISION

We look for a world of non-violent relationships among women, men and children between humankind and creation between ourselves and God

We look for a world where conflicts are resolved without violence where power is found in the enabling strength of solidarity and not in domination legitimised by force and fear.

We look for a world where all people have the space to live and grow in dignity where all women can discern their worth and competence where we experience the liberating power of justice and love.

OUR EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Invited by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) to share in a global process as part of the Ecumenical Decade: 'Churches in Solidarity with Women' (1988-98), 24 women met in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland, from November 29 to December 4 1994 to consider 'Violence Against Women'. Our host was the Corrymeela Community, a group of Roman Catholics and Protestants which has worked for thirty years to promote and enable dialogue, understanding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. At their residential centre, we were given warm and gracious hospitality, and our time together has been enriched by being rooted in a community practically committed to the hope and vision of peace in a violent world.

We have celebrated and struggled with our unity and diversity as women in a changing Europe. The iron curtain which once divided us has come down, but curtains remain which separate us one from another, and overshadow our lands, and stifle our freedoms. They divide us within Europe, and also from our sisters and brothers throughout the world.

Under the veneer of equality there is a huge gulf between rich and poor, as structures, economic policies and political decisions attack the weak and vulnerable in favour of the wealthy and powerful.

Under the veneer of democracy, tensions and conflicts simmer and boil - between peoples of different nationalities, religions, race and cultures.

Under the veneer of justice, we are building a 'Fortress Europe' to protect our privilege, status and wealth, by excluding those we consider unworthy of sanctuary, freedom of movement and of expression.

The heightened tension in present-day Europe have exacerbated all kinds of violence, and expose the many forms of abuse suffered by women under the surface of our 'civilised' society. They are coming out of the shadows of concealment.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN EUROPE: OUR STORY

We women from 14 European Countries and of different traditions and circumstances, have shared our stories and concerns. Sisters from Africa and Asia helped us to link these with their own experiences. The voices we heard, and suffering we witnessed, by no means tell the whole story, but are representative of the violence done to women all over Europe.

We listened to the women of Northern Ireland, who work to pull back the curtain between religious and political communities, to face up to the damaging effects of division on children, women and men, and to go further towards reconciliation. Now, after 25 years of 'The Troubles', they are committed to the task of building trust and goodwill in the context of a cease-fire which has made so much of the agony seem futile.

We mourned for the women of former Yugoslavia, systematically degraded in body, mind and spirit as a deliberate strategy by militarist war lords. The 'Women in Black' of Belgrade encouraged us to solidarity with their protest against war.

We wept for millions of women in Belarus, their lives for ever devastated by the invisible death which pervades their land after Chernobyl; struggling to bear hope and courage in the

appalling knowledge that they had no choice but to live in a contaminated place, and to give their children poisoned food. In spite of official assurances, their anguish is mocked by the prospect of two new nuclear power plants in Belarus, and the continuing nuclearisation of the world.

We heard of sudden change in the lives and opportunities of Eastern European women, struggling with unemployment, economic dependency and the call to return to the home, because governments have reversed their political and fiscal ideology. Their right to health-care, housing and child-care has been seriously restricted and while legislation protects men from taking responsibility for their children and ex-wives.

We heard that thousands of women, from poorer countries within and beyond Europe, are trafficked to service the sex industry of rich countries - tricked, bartered and coerced into lives of prostitution, isolation and slavery.

We recalled that for thousands of women in every country and of all social backgrounds, home is not a safe haven of love, but a place of anxiety, pain and terror. For example, in Sweden, one woman every week is killed by her abusive partner; in Scotland, fifty women and their children leave their homes every day to flee domestic violence; in Germany, a child (usually a girl) is sexually abused every three minutes, and a woman is raped every four minutes.

We heard the voice of immigrant and especially of Black women in Europe - forced into poverty and isolation, oppressed and silenced by the economic and social injustice of racist attitudes and immigration laws.

We were confronted with the violence of poverty which is the daily experience of more and more women in affluent European nations - young women, those with children, older women - all engaged in the harsh struggle for survival in societies which value consumer power more highly than the common good.

We acknowledged that our cultures have developed deeply distorted understandings of female sexuality, which exploit, patronise and objectify our bodies for male consumption.

We shared the experience of women whose faith, commitment and service have been taken for granted by their churches, but whose participation has not been sufficiently esteemed or recognised by the structures of power and decision-making within those churches.

We spoke out about sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse by clergy and church workers: of women and children wounded by the actions of men who claim the authority of Christ's name - their wholeness fragmented, their anger imprisoned by shame and guilt.

The stories we have shared are of women violated in their bodies, their sexuality, their community, their futures; for violence is indivisible. But we have also shared the reality that it is women who struggle against disintegration. They are not simply victims, but survivors seeking the resources of solidarity and strength to create a better world. Women are coming out of the shadows.

THE ROOTS AND CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

During our time together we have realised the extent to which all expressions of violence damage the whole human community - women, men and children. The economic order which has achieved dominance in Europe, and which has been exported to so much of the world, imposes conditions of hardship, exploitation and dependency upon many to ensure the comfort and position of others. It assaults our sense of mutual obligation and undermines individual and corporate quality of life. We are all affected by the structures and systems which institutionalise violence, and are called to understand their roots, so that we may struggle together to overcome their effects.

The source of violence surely lies in the way we understand and use power. Our religious and philosophical traditions have valued the exercise of power and control as domination of the strong over the weak. We have learnt to believe that certain people, embodying certain characteristics, are more worthy and important than others, and that they have the right to use violence as an expression of that worth. The patriarchal world view which has shaped our models of family, community, religion and state, has deeply ingrained the idea of male supremacy and the right of men to use whatever means they choose to achieve order and control. The theology, language and institutions of Christianity have been used to legitimise male power and its violent exercise. God has been understood in male terms, and God's action and desire for the world has been imaged as confirming the greater value and mastery of men.

Patriarchal dualism has deeply affected all the institutions and cultures which have developed in Europe. It has denigrated 'the other' in all that differs from, or appears to threaten, the centrality of the powerful white male: women, children, people of different race or colour, those without material substance or wealth, the earth itself. Our political ideologies and systems - from capitalism to communism - have effectively devalued the worth of women in production and reproduction. They have preferred technological development to human nurture and co-operation; they have exacted a style and pace of life which tends to blunt our sensitivity and empathy; they have dealt the world death by methods both subtle and brutal.

Personal attack, sexual abuse, nationalistic wars, religious conflicts, racial hatred, economic injustice - these expressions of violence are all based on failures to honour the diversity, respect the worth, and share the vulnerability of each person in our common humanity. They are denials of Christ, who did not control or dominate, who gave people the space and dignity to be true to themselves, and who empowered them to love.

OUR CALL TO THE CHURCH

In 1988, at the launch of the Ecumenical Decade, the churches committed themselves to stand in solidarity with women, and to 'free themselves from racism, sexism and classism, and from teachings and practices that discriminate against women'.

We encourage the church, as the body of Christ in the world, to be a real source of empowerment for women.

1. By LISTENING to the voices of women:
   - hear with humility the stories, concerns and experiences of women
   - enable women to stand up and speak out against violence and for their rights
   - seek out and use the advice of women on questions of particular concern to them (eg procreation, productive rights, genetic engineering)
   - support women who have survived violence to make their own decisions and travel their own journey, rather than burdening them with shame and guilt, or regarding them as victims in need of charity
   - work for a real and open dialogue between those who hold leadership and authority in the churches and women
   - make decisions and policies only through a process of listening to and working with women
   - become aware of the depth and extent of the violation of women's human rights in the European context
2. By LEARNING with and from women
   - establish within each church a permanent women's office to promote awareness and understanding of women's issues
   - that women are not objects or commodities to be bartered or possessed within a free market (in marriage, prostitution, sex tourism, trafficking, or abuse in counselling relationships)
   - that women of colour, refugees and immigrants experience the double persecution of racism and sexism
   - who share their lives with those affected by violence, discovering what it means to stand in solidarity with the oppressed
   - to work together creatively towards a true community of women and men in the church
3. By ACKNOWLEDGING failure and complicity
   - admit the traditional connections between theology and the violation of women
   - recognise the churches' responsibility, through their educational processes, for the socialisation of men and women, clergy and laity, into stereotypical and damaging gender and power roles
   - re-imagine theology from female perspectives, considering the imagery, language, symbolism, liturgy and culture of Christianity
   - examine the dominance of a theology which has emphasised the blood, suffering and submission of Christ's death as a model of salvation, at the expense of the challenge and liberation of his life and resurrection
   - face up to the problems which churches have in understanding and dealing with sexuality - especially that of men
   - confess and condemn the existence of violence against women within the churches: both in their structures, and as committed by individual clergy and church workers
   - admit the potential in all of us, male and female, for abuse and violence, and encourage honest self-examination of our attitudes and actions
4. By ACTING in solidarity with women to change the power structures of the church
   - by sharing power
   - by allowing decisions to be shaped by the insights of women
   - by encouraging women to take position of leadership to change the attitude and perceptions of men in the church
   - by developing educational programmes in clergy and lay formation which raise awareness of violence against women, and train workers to respond appropriately
   - by asserting the unconditional right of women to resist violence, to leave abusive relationships, and to affirm their individuality
   - by stressing the intrinsic, God-given dignity and worth of women to be a prophetic voice in the world
   - by active support of the human right to make choices about work, family and personal development
   - by celebrating, and not condemning, the social and sexual diversity of people, and their different forms of community
   - by denouncing mass media representations which exploit, humiliate, degrade, trivialise and promote violence against women
   - by fighting against the sex trade in women and children
   - by supporting Black women, refugees and immigrants in their struggles to overcome racism and discrimination
   - by offering sanctuary to survivors, and imposing sanctions against the perpetrators of violence and abuse, so that the church can truly be a place of safety
   - by giving public commendation to those who offer refuge, shelter and support to women fleeing domestic violence
   - by working alongside secular women's agencies, organisations and networks in the endeavour to end violence
   - by taking a strong stand against the injustice of the global economic system

We understand the fact that the dignity of women is undermined worldwide as a violation of the church as the body of Christ.

Violence against women prevents the church from being a true community of women and men.

We are challenged as women and men in the church in our different positions to take appropriate responsibility.

Let us break the silence of violence against women
in our prayer
in our preaching
in our practice
let us proclaim the story of women coming out of the shadows

We tell the church 'Be Not Afraid - be in solidarity with women.'

ANOTHER SMALL MOMENT OF ANGER

It would be easier if,
I would see hope if
Women weren't the only ones to fight
to struggle
If Blacks weren't the only ones trying
to find a place to stand,
The poor weren't the only ones trying
to overcome oppression

There is a future if
You white affluent men let go.

Not to stand up to be counted and so
to gain even more
but to stand down.
Not to give us your surplus so
it doesn't hurt you,
but to give all;
Not to tell us your ideas of how we can
escape our oppression,
so you still have your power,
but to hear what we say;
Not to make judgements on the way we fight
so you can remain safe:
But to become insecure, confused, frightened
like a child ...
and then we can begin.

Maryanne l'Estrange
(Aotearoa - New Zealand)
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RE-IMAGINING AND REFORMATION

by Janice Love

Space and voice are powerful. Although the church is called to be a sanctuary of safe space where Christians listen carefully to one another, it often is not. Those who do not identify with the dominant culture or prevailing theology frequently feel neither safe, valued, or heard in most churches.

Ecumenical feminists/womanists regularly challenge churches to provide opportunity for women to express the rich variety of their concerns and perspectives, a call at the heart of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women. The number of women is increasing in places where theology is created and transmitted and where churches are governed. But women do not always feel at home in such settings. We often feel like sisters in brother-land, foreigners in someone else's territory.

Whether or not churches meet the challenge of facilitating space and voice for women, Christian women repeatedly demonstrate remarkable ingenuity and perseverance in creating small and large places where we can be ourselves, affirming each other and our faith together. On these occasions we remove the facade of trying to fit into the space someone else defines.

Such freedom for women sometimes frightens or startles other Christians. Critics often move quickly to shut down the space and silence the voices when offended by what we do and say.

The now famous November 1993 Minneapolis conference of Re-Imagining, held in conjunction with the Ecumenical Decade, was quite different from most I attend precisely because it stretched participants into space unexplored by most. The gathering empowered the multiplicity of Christian women's voices in both choruses and cacophonies of concerns and perspectives we had not heard in quite the same way.

Initiated by local groups of ecumenical Christians in the Twin Cities, the gathering became a well organized act of evangelism with wide appeal rarely found in the work of metropolitan councils. The conference filled beyond expectations to over 2100 participants (plus a waiting list) from a range of denominations in both Canada and the United States.

The worship and spiritual enrichment were profound. Despite the large number of people, we felt intimately connected to other people and to God. We could relax as though we were in the comfort of our mother's or our best friend's kitchen, a space where we felt safe enough to be ourselves, to share our hopes, our pain, our joys and our determination as women working for change in the church.

The community created that weekend became so safe that, at one point, about 100 lesbian women gathered at the centre to reveal their sexual orientation to the entire conference, some for the first time. Fully aware that both church and society treat lesbians as outcasts, the gathering embraced them and stood in solidarity with them.

Participants prayed in song, chant, liturgy, silence and shared stories. We prayed for the blessing of wisdom, for guidance in our journeys, and for the transformation of the church. We celebrated our heritage as Christian women and the sacrifices of those who go before us in struggles for justice and peace. We celebrated the life God gives us, including our bodies, senses, and sexuality. We danced, clapped and cried in rediscovering that we are not as isolated as we thought, that so many of us have more in common than we imaged.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of the folk group Sweet Honey in the Rock, sang and preached the old spiritual, "We'll stand the storm it won't be long, we'll anchor by and by." Being in the storm, she said, is the only way to know what an anchor is. Many felt that we found a piece of that anchor that weekend, an anchor of shared faith and renewed Christian community. Departing Minneapolis, however, began our return to the storm.

Conservative groups, especially within the Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian (USA), and United Methodist churches, accused participants of deviating from established church doctrine, of committing heresies. Although some reports of the conference severely distort what transpired there, these critics legitimately perceive diverse theological articulations that differ from the mainstream of church tradition, a tradition primarily created and dominated by patriarchal ideas and practices.

Creative re-imagining of the Christian faith and the church was deliberate. We used our space and voice to envision and reconstruct feminine concepts of God. We found new and forgotten dimensions and stories of Jesus Christ. We chal-

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RE-IMAGINING AND REFORMATION

lenged traditional doctrines and symbols that implicate us in reconciliation without justice, in forgiveness without genuine repentance by the offenders, and in suffering and crucifixion in return for a false sense of peace.

Rather than heresy, however, these and other efforts by Christian women are part of a remarkable reformation sweeping the church. This is bottom-up ecumenism, uncontrolled and uncontrollable by religious authorities but deeply moving to women and men alike. Many yearn for new or renewed life in Christian community, a church that speaks to their daily circumstances, their deepest despair, highest hopes, and greatest joys. Conferences like the Re-Imagining provide such.

Critics react in fear and anger. When participants question some familiar and traditionally clear categories of true belief vs. false, right vs. wrong, and good vs. bad, these groups are offended. In reaction, they call for punishment and denunciation: Fire the national staff who supported the gathering! Chastise the groups who provided resources! Discipline the participants!

For the critics, these calls represent a means to restore dignity and boundaries to doctrines they cherish. For conference participants, these calls feel like a witch hunt.

History often parades ironies before us. The denominations wracked by turmoil over this conference draw their foundations from some of the most profound social and religious reform movements the world has witnessed. The conflict confronting us now begs for careful attention to the costs of past efforts to crush diversity and stifle dissent.

Reformations are birthed by those with vision to bring new insights and understandings to the faith; by those with courage sufficient to deviate from established doctrine; by those who endure punishment to witness to the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, to the truth they know in Jesus Christ.

Time will test the concepts, ideas, liturgies, stories, and shared experiences of the Re-Imagining Conference. Women will create more space and voice within which to challenge and support each other in discussions about these matters and others of women's experience. The grass-roots of this reform will grow and be strengthened, or wither and die, with or without the permission of officialdom.

Scripture and tradition can offer a rich heritage of faith. Reform can bring a remarkable, sometimes wild, rushing wind of the Holy Spirit. Reason suggests that, rather than denounce and attempt to eliminate each other's perspective, we who claim membership in the body of Christ should reach across our differences to share in and learn from the gifts God gives us all.

For those of us who found space and voice together at the Re-Imagining, no criticism, condemnation or punishment will undermine or eliminate the authenticity of our experience—an experience of grace we found together, of renewed determination to achieve justice, and of lasting commitment to the Christian faith.

Janice Love is an Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina and a member of Wesley United Methodist Church in Columbia. She is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and chairs the WCC working group on International Affairs. She was among the group of women who first proposed in 1986 that the WCC sponsor an Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988 - 1998). She wrote this article for Sojourners as a response to the growing criticisms against the Re-Imagining Decade Event in Minniapolis, November 1993.

YOUTH ENCOUNTER ON RIGHTS OF PEOPLE AND DEMOCRACY IN DOMINICA

Human Rights & democracy & Calypso & the Caribbean

by Kimmo Räntilä

When we came together to the Holy Redeemer's Retreat centre in Dominica, we were not going to be silent. We were 40 young people from all around the world, we were not innocent, not indifferent nor ignorant. So the week was culture versus human rights, torture versus money, calypso and steel drums versus multinational rock factories.

The exposure programme

A pig is swimming in the open drain, shit is stinking but the woman could be posing on the front page of Vogue. Her son is not that beautiful, he is slow and not interested, he may have got enough food but not the right kind. Young mother's cousin shows the scar of caesarean section and swears the doctor to the hottest hell. The doctor works for an international organisation and the treatment should not cost too much for the poor people. But it does.

The place is called Cité Soleil, the biggest slum of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. And I'm on the exposure tour of the encounter.

We were divided into four groups, one visited Jamaica and Cuba, one Haiti and the Dominican Republic, one Guyana and Surinam and one Martinique and Dominica. The groups spent five days in these countries, met with church people, human rights activists, social workers, youth leaders, a cabinet minister too. One group visited a jail, another a voodoo ceremony and a third one visited Carib indians.

When we came together in Dominica, we could have discussed for a whole day the life of the bush negroes of Surinam. We could have spent another day trying to understand the history of voodoo. Or the political violence in Jamaica. Or the education system of Cuba.

Culture rules over individual

"If people have been accustomed to doing something for thousands of years, how do you tell them that what they've been doing all this time is wrong?"

On her exposure tour Melissa Ifill, from Guyana, witnessed an initiation of young amerindian women. In this Surinamese culture it is a test of endurance: red ants are placed onto the skin of the girls and they have to endure the bites without making a noise. If they fulfil the task, they are ready for marriage and for all the burdens of adulthood. Some participants of the exposure group regarded the rite as torture. Basically, Melissa Ifill respects the diversity of cultures. What is cruel about a girl receiving the respect of an adult woman? And if it happens through the bites of ants?

When it comes to different cultures, it's also important to think who defines the good and the valuable. "The ideal standard most likely comes from the western cultures", says Melissa Ifill. But only scarcely western is really equal to universal.

The human rights are the same for all, but according to Melissa it's hard or even impossible to give advice from outside a specific culture. The initiative to change must come from inside. "If the village, the group, the women see the need for some sort of change, of equal rights, go ahead!"

Individual rights rule over culture

On the contrary, Marjorie Tolentino, from the Philippines, argues that people can't be deprived of the good life just because they don't know about it. In Surinam for example the descendants of runaway slaves, the bush negroes, live mostly in detached huts outside the rest of the society. The don't know that they have the right to claim something from the government. "Can this be an excuse for the government not to do anything for them?"

According to Marjorie Tolentino, you can't keep violating human rights just because the tradition must continue. The people within the culture may feel happy and content, and this feeling may be genuine. Yet everything possible must be done in order to change the submitting ways of life. "It's lack of knowledge: somebody else has defined happiness on behalf of these people."

In the Philippines Women's Lib is the exclusive right of the rich

and the educated. "If the girl comes from a poor family and is not educated, she is submissive to men," Marjorie explains. "When men get married, they get wife and maid in the same person."

Changing violent patterns of a culture is a long and painful process. Self-determination may mean conflict with the whole surrounding society. But, without becoming conscious of one's own rights it's not possible to define one's own values, one's own life. And when it comes to, for example, women's rights, it also comes to the future generations. "If I can make sure that my daughter won't suffer any more for the same thing, I do anything... This is the greatest gift you can give to your children: to break a pattern that has imprisoned life generations after generations. That is love."

Torture is cost-effective

Mike McCormack heads the Guyana Human Rights Association. He sees reason in torture. "It's cost effective. If you want to have information quickly, this is the economic way", Mike says and doesn't smile a bit. "You don't need to keep people in jails for a long time, you don't need to build toilets, train guards, buy food. No lawyers, no trial expenses. So, torture applies well to the logistics of capitalism."

Mike McCormack facilitated the workshops of the consultation. The meaning was to give young people tools to grasp different kinds of human rights situations. According to Mike we often simply lack the language to deal with human rights. And the best way to create the language is to start from very near: Own church, office, trade union, football team. Inequality and discrimination must firstly be met at home.

With most human right questions putting pressure on the governments is essential. And when we try to do that, one voice is not enough. We need to find the common voice of different organisations, of different individuals. Mike criticises churches for conceptualizing too much. "If we have the conviction that human rights are important, that's enough. Move on!"

Kimmo Räntilä is a journalist, communications' consultant and teacher. He is a member of the Lutheran Church of Finland.

Black Columbus

"The Caribbean was for me just something you can see on the map. I felt like Christopher Columbus," smiles Charles Mugaviri from Zimbabwe. But soon the Revered Mugaviri found something familiar: the rhythm of music and the talk about structural adjustment programmes, the history of colonisation. "People everywhere are struggling to find their own identity as a people. Everywhere they try to define their own destination."

Young people have problems also in Harare, and they come to Charles with their problems. The discussions in the consultation showed Charles some root causes to the problems he meets back home. "We in the church tend to compartmentalize life, we have the spiritual and the secular. But God calls us to deal with the total person. You cannot talk about one aspect of life and forget about the others."

For Charles Mugaviri most important about the consultation was the experience itself, "the richness of coming together, just feeling it. For me it's beyond any resolutions, any workshops, any discussions. It's the experience that will always stay. It is as if a brick has been added to my own life."

Freedom Fighter

Michael Wallepe comes from Ouvéa, New Caledonia. He works with young people on his island and he's also active in the independence movement of his country. During the exposure tour Michael was sick, but he was moved by the meeting with the Carib indians in Dominica.

Michael found the workshops especially useful. It was the universality of human rights that struck him. The right to speak out, for example, is the same for a Canac and a Carib and a Canadian. "Human rights are a bit like Bible. You can adapt them to any culture."

ABOUT SISTERS AND SISTERHOOD

Exclusion and marginalization, intolerance, ethnic conflicts, xenophobia, racism and lack of solidarity are some of the trends in the world today which go against a culture of life and do not promote community values.

Fortunately, at all times, there are people around the world who are working toward achieving participation, inclusiveness, affirmation of diversity, respect of identities, solidarity and cooperation. Among these people are many Black and Indigenous women as well as women from ethnic minorities from all over the globe. These women struggle against racism, casteism, sexism and classism, for better conditions of living and for values that promote life. In the midst of this context, more than a decade ago, women of colour asked the World Council of Churches for a programme that would support them in their struggle against oppression and would strengthen the links among them for the empowerment of themselves and their cause. Thus the Women Under Racism programme was formed.

Over the years the work of the programme of Women Under Racism has grown in assessing the problems of racial, caste, class, religious, ethnic, regional, colonial and sexual discrimination against women of colour. The Women Under Racism maintain the firm conviction that is important to mobilize churches in order that they can be active in the support of their struggle and to ensure that women of colour have visibility within the life of the churches and communities and that their concerns are seriously taken into consideration and acted upon.

In the search for continuous ways of supporting initiatives of women of colour, networking has become a major strategy for the Women Under Racism programme. It was with the vision of forming a global sisterhood for the advancement of women of colour, and as a significant contribution to the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, that eighty women involved in this programme met in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in October 1992 to establish SISTERS - Sisters In The Struggle to Eliminate Racism and Sexism.

SISTERS is a network which seeks to strengthen the linking up and the exchange of experiences of Black women, Indigenous women and women of ethnic minorities. These women come from churches as well as from organizations of the civil society, that are committed to the struggle to eliminate racism and sexism.

Beyond the main purposes just mentioned, SISTERS aims to be an instrument for the empowerment of women of colour in their continuous struggle. It is expected that the building of sisterhood facilitated by networking will promote support, individual and collective, enable expressions of soli-

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darity through concrete actions and will be an instrument for promoting issues internationally.

SISTERS also aims to be an instrument of information sharing the concerns and issues that are crucial for women of colour (health, education, human rights, economics, violence against women, land rights among others). The exchange of information on issues and activities of the network as well as other networks are important tools for the work carried out at the local level. A SISTERS Network newsletter is envisaged as one of the tools for information sharing.

To facilitate the information sharing regionally and globally, initial steps towards a SISTERS data base have been taken. It will store basic information such as addresses and purpose of organizations of women of colour as well as more specific data related to areas of expertise, training and education. This information will be helpful in the formation of sub-networks by common areas of interest. It is expected that it will facilitate the weaving together in solidarity of all regions, east, west, north and south.

The Network is envisaged in global terms but its action and organization have a regional basis. As a collective initiative, the Network will only respond to its purpose through collective responsibility which implies individual commitment and respect for the other sisters involved. Every one of the sisters in the Network is responsible for keeping it going and keeping it operational according to its objectives.

This element of collective responsibility points to another important concept present in the life of SISTERS since its inception: autonomy. In spite of the fact that the SISTERS Network was initiated under the auspices of the Women Under Racism programme and the World Council of Churches, autonomy has been a goal for the future. Therefore, the model of operation of the Network should be one that reinforces this vision of future autonomy and that sets the basis for it. In light of that the definition of plans of action for the SISTERS Network has been regionally based through the coming together of Black and Indigenous women and women of ethnic minorities in workshops where they share their experiences, struggles and strategies and address their priorities for work. The Plans of Action to be implemented regionally shall be more and more in the hands of the sisters in each region ensuring that the work is carried out as independently as possible and that the impact of the creative dynamics of various experiences at the local and national level will enrich the potentialities of the SISTERS Network and its future.

by Marilia Schüller, executive secretary in the Programme to Combat Racism, Unit III, WCC.

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28)

WOMEN IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

HEAVENLY VISION & HISTORICAL REALITIES

We are today faced with cultural changes that affect the entire planet. One of the significant phenomena of this mutation is the fact that women are now speaking out; they, along with a number of men, are concerned to promote specifically feminine values. Despite the efforts and intuitions of some avant-garde theologians, like Paul Evdokimov in particular, the historical Orthodox Churches have up to now paid little attention to this. Could it be that women have no problems in Orthodoxy? It would seem to me quite thoughtless to make such a categorical statement. Could it be that in view of political and cultural conditions of the East European societies as well as those of the Middle East where the historical Orthodox Churches have their roots, such problems have not yet begun to arise? Or, without underestimating the role played by cultural factors, are the real reasons for this attitude, for the Orthodox "difference", to be found in a global vision that is theological, anthropological and spiritual all at the same time? We are, in fact, only now becoming aware of this vision. But must not this luminous and dynamic vision be freed from the thick layer of dust and deposits that has dimmed it over the centuries? Do we not have to rediscover the living inspiration of tradition under the crippling shell of prejudices?

by Elisabeth Behr-Sigel

BREAKING THE SILENCE

From the beginning, woman's place has been assigned to her by nature and by tradition. And in fact, women have felt quite comfortable there, not feeling in the least oppressed or frustrated. At any rate, this is what we often hear from ecclesiastic circles and it is partly true, but only partly so.

Besides, do not those who usually speak on this question, mostly men, most often forget to ask women for their opinions?

A few years ago, the Orthodox episcopate of a certain region of Europe organized a consultation on the problems of contraception and abortion. Priests, theologians, male doctors were invited but as far as I know, no woman was invited. Therefore, no woman was able to express an opinion on these questions. Is such an attitude really outdated today? It did not indeed result from any canonical rule but rather reflected a mentality. The thinking of the Church is determined by men as though women by nature were not capable of participating in a debate, in the light of the Word of God and under the guidance of the spirit, about an existential problem that is of immediate concern to them. In fact, the concepts of tradition and nature which are used to justify this exclusion are quite ambiguous. Are these concepts petrified mental habits, hold-overs from paganism, or do they come from the transmission of the fire of the divine revelation? And really, what nature are we talking bout? Is it the broken and torn nature of Adam and Eve in their fallen condition or the nature of the new creature reunified and reconciled in Christ? Must we recall what the Church solemnly proclaims at each baptism and celebration of Pentecost: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28).

Attentive to the apostolic word and trying to read the signs of the times in its light, I believe that Orthodox women must be called out of their silence. I am not referring to the blessed and fruitful silence of prayer from which flow strong and inspired words, but rather to the sterile silence of resignation and indifference, a silence that does not exclude futile chatter but rather produces it. It was probably that useless noise that St. Paul had in mind when he issued his famous injunction which people never fail to bring up! ("... the women should keep silence in the churches..." I Cor. 14:34). Yes, it is time that Orthodox women dare to speak out: not in a spirit of surly confrontation, bitterly demanding certain rights. Orthodox women should rather speak out in order to undertake a reflection together with

their fathers, brothers, and husbands on the tasks that confront us today, we who are all members of the royal and priestly people of God.

Here and now, could not there be an authentic dialogue between men and women that would bring about the renewal of the aborted dialogue in the West between humanism and faith? In place of a Cartesian humanism of the male, "master and possessor of the earth", we must substitute a new humanism pervaded with respect for the other, with tenderness and compassion for mankind and the whole of God's creation. Would not a genuinely, feminine presence in all domains of culture, including the concrete life of our ecclesiastical communities, contribute to such humanism?

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: A SIGN OF OUR TIMES

The problem concerning the place of the feminine principle in the plan of salvation and in the life of the Church has an anthropological dimension. It concerns the divine plan for humanity and its revelation in Christ by the Holy Spirit in the Church. The problem, nonetheless, has its historical side and we must deal with it today in the context of the cultural mutation of the last quarter of the 20th century. The women's movement and the aspiration for the "promotion of women" are certainly important aspects of the problem.

Some Orthodox think that this mutation does not concern the Church but only "the changing face of the passing world". Such an attitude certainly reflects one of the aims of Christian life: to keep the agitation of the world a salutary distance away. The Church is thus preserved from becoming infatuated with ephemeral fashions, from "kneeling clown before the world". in the words of the "peasant from Garonne", Jacques Maritain. Even though the disciples of Christ are anchored in the eschaton and look forward to the omega, they are not relieved of the duty of reading the "signs of the times". In fact, their master specifically imposed that duty upon them (Mt 16:3). Jesus' Kingdom "is not of this world", if we understand "world" to mean the kingdom of Satan, the reign of the powers that are arrayed against God. Jesus' kingdom, however, is not a stranger to historical development. The Gospel parables compare this kingdom to a seed thrown into the earth of men; in this earth it sprouts, grows and becomes "a tree and the birds of the air make nests in its branches" (Mt. 13:32 and Lk. 13:19). The contemporary women's movement (rather than "feminist" movement) is, in spite of its weaknesses, a sign of that secret and irresistible force of the Spirit that is lifting humanity toward the Kingdom of the life-giving Trinity. This movement is certainly an ambiguous and sometimes irritating sign, written in clumsy letters and spoken of in consciously provocative terms, a sign of "a Christian idea gone haywire" in our Far West that finds itself submerged by a nihilistic tidal wave. We live in a time of violence that often takes on atrocious or absurd forms. This blind violence carries along with it, however, a tremendous hope for the liberation of mankind, for the respect of dignity for the right to be different, whether on the ethnic, cultural, or sexual level. The women's movement participates both in the violence and in the noble hope that is the divine image in man. Despite its excesses, violence and distorting simplification, the women's movement asks serious questions of the Churches. Let us pray that the Churches do not pass by on the other side as the Levite in the parable. Through the sound and fury, let us hope that they discern the murmuring of the Spirit.

The contemporary women's movement (rather than "feminist" movement) is, in spite of its weaknesses, a sign of that secret and irresistible force of the Spirit that is lifting humanity toward the Kingdom of the life-giving Trinity.

THE TRINITY: SUPREME DISTINCTION IN SUPREME COMMUNION AND EQUAL DIGNITY

Without knowing it, the human sciences, like psychology, sociology and ethnology, have been fertilised by the Gospel revolution and have themselves become liberating forces, provided we know how to make good use of them. They have helped women to become conscious of the social and cultural mechanisms that have enslaved them, mechanisms that have deepened mere differences so as to transform them into inequalities. In general, we note that "collectivities have only tolerated differences by transforming them into hierarchies and hierarchies have been set up by profoundly deepening the differences". (P. Thibaud "La Part des Femmes", Esprit, June 1967, p 105.) Differentiation is nearly always tied up with inequality whether we are dealing with differences of race, skin colour, culture, or sex. It does not obviously stand to reason that the recognition of women's specific difference is compatible with the recognition of their equality. Realizing this bitter truth, we can only appeal, from the fallen world in which we are bound, to the revelation hidden

from the wise and intelligent ones of this world, to the revelation of the one God in three Persons.

The Trinity is a sign of supreme distinction in supreme communion and equal dignity, a sign of love's total reciprocity. But the ability to receive such a mystery, which secretly orientates all human nostalgia for fulfilment, requires a conversion and leap of faith. If women do not go beyond the empirical knowledge of fallen humanity — and this is the only knowledge open to "the human sciences" — they may be tempted today to reject any idealization of womanhood as a mystification which stresses their specific differences in order to limit their freedom. Hence "the soul" or "feminine charisms" are exalted, but only to keep women from real responsibilities in a society run by men. Women are thus assigned to the home and to motherhood. But is this not just a way of covering over with vain words the emptiness of the lives of many women in the conditions of modern life: the nuclear family reduced to the couple with one or two children who rather quickly attain psychological and moral independence; a growing number of single women who do not feel a calling to monastic life just because they are single. Very often these women are the most demanding and have very rich inner lives, but they feel the need to go beyond the narrow framework and self-centredness of contemporary family life made up of two or three.

The women's movement is thus against a conception of woman that has in part been rendered obsolete by the scientific and industrial revolution. We must add that it is also a revolt against a "primitive freudianism" that is widespread in our permissive societies.

Women's demands have their origins in New Testament preaching, in the revolutionary proclamation of the equal dignity in Christ of men and women. This proclamation was revolutionary in the rabbinical context of the time but women are not always aware of the origins of their demands. However, the women's movement, being cut off from its spiritual roots and being secularized and made profane, has become "feminist" and in the process, has caused a deep and widely spread identity crisis. In societies dominated by perverted masculine values, by sin, by a spirit of competition and domination and an appetite for power and pleasure, women end up denying their own most profound being, open as it is to the inspirations from On High. Sexual differentiation is reduced to a biological accident and femininity becomes the product of social pressure or rather of social oppressions. After so many interpretations that lower and debase the symbolism of the feminine body, this very symbolism has become meaningless. Its language is no longer heard except in its most trivial meaning. According to the expression of a contemporary psychoanalyst, men and women are nothing more than "desiring machines". Aggressively claiming equality, militant feminists end up internalizing the hated image of the dominating male and by manifesting his negative traits. These women become "little dictators".[1]

... of the woman that has in part been rendered obsolete by the scientific and industrial revolution. We must add that it is also a revolt against a "primitive freudianism" that is widespread in our permissive societies.

We have here a tragic shipwreck in which there is the risk of losing all essential dimensions of what is human. Without this dimension humanity will be forever mutilated and deprived of its wings. "Who am I?" "Who are we?" "Where do we find our fulfilment?" Many women and their male companions are asking these questions today. The human sciences can only take to pieces the mechanisms of fallen empirical reality. They are powerless, however, to orient human hope and we must therefore turn once more to the experience of faith and to the divine message transmitted by the Church.

In line with the conclusions of many contemporary thinkers, we agree that one of the important tasks of a reflective and living faith is to find theoretical and practical answers to the "questions about man", about men and women. The answers are implicit in the doctrine of the Church and we are called to uncover its existential meaning and to incarnate it in a spiritual art of living.

SIGN POSTS LEADING TO A THEO-ANTHROPOLOGY OF MEN AND WOMEN

Biblical and patristic anthropology is really a theo-anthropology; man is never thought of as being self-sufficient but always in an immediate relationship with God. Created in the image of God, humanity can only grow toward, and be fulfilled in, Him, in the radiance of the trinitarian light. When man turns away from his prototype, he falls to the animal level and even lower, as such great modern Russian thinkers as Boukharev, Dostoevsky and Berdiaev have affirmed, in line with patristic thinking. Mankind's vocation is therefore to strive for the likeness of God, or to use the language of the Fathers, to strive for theosis, that is, holiness. Man, in holiness and faithfulness to his divine vocation,

is called to reign over the earth (Gn. 1: 28-30), humanize it and submit it to the divine will of love. Now mankind was created in the image of God and destined to grow in and toward the divine likeness through his freely offered obedience of faith; he was also created from the beginning as masculine and feminine: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gn. 1:27).

The use of the singular and the personal pronouns "him" and "them" reflect the Hebrew text and is of great importance. We thus have the scriptural affirmation of two truths; at the same time, human nature is united, that is, the totality of mankind is made in the image of God as well as being diversified. Man from the beginning carries the ontological image of God. He is called to advance endlessly toward God. He is not to do this, however, as a solitary individual or as a non-sexual being like the angels, but rather in the masculine-feminine bipolarity. In the words of a Father of the Church, man is essentially a "conjugal" being. The condominium of the earth and the task of cultivating it has been given to two who were drawn from the same clay and destined to become one single flesh, and to form one single humanity. Far from being the consequence of original sin, the sexual differentiation of humanity is a blessing from the fundamentally optimistic biblical point of view:

> "And God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it' ... And God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good" (Gn. 1: 28-31).

Even though the Church has never ceased to read this biblical passage, Christians have not become fully conscious of all its anthropological, or rather theo-anthropological, implications. Too many prejudices, too many ancestral taboos have darkened our minds. A fruitful dialectical relationship between theology and anthropology, mutually enriching each other, can make possible today a new reading of these verses in a new light. What is more, this re-reading is proposed as a task which Orthodox thinkers cannot escape.

... men and women in the Church are called to work together for their salvation and the world's; they are to fulfil themselves with and by each other in their striving toward the Third: God, who is the foundation of their unity.

To answer today's questions about man and woman, we are invited to look beyond the horizon of fallen empirical reality toward the divine mystery which is the foundation of all that is authentically human. Every human person transfigured in the radiance of this mystery: the mystery of one God in three distinct Persons, united in a sacred order without subordination, equal in dignity; each Person set with and not against the others in an eternal movement, in an eternal dance of love. Mankind has the vocation of becoming like this God who is the archetype, the model of the fullness of personal life in the fullness of communion. Man, both one and multiple, was created in the image of this divine Tri-Unity, according to the diversity of sexual persons who are called to reflect "the trinitarian life and love" in their reciprocal relationships. They are to work out these relations on the level of the creature but are also to be drawn up On High by the weight of grace.

Sin, which essentially is separation, breaks up the paradisiac unity of humanity, but this unity is restored in Christ the God-Man and we participate in it in the Church, his Body (Ga. 3:27-28). This eschatological unity, whose first fruits we have already received, is not brought about by suppressing all distinctions. What is abolished is not the difference between men and women but rather the quarrel (when they "differ"), the hostility between a bad masculinity and a bad femininity both of which have been perverted by sin. The Son and the Spirit are united for the joint accomplishment of the Father's will, each One according to his proper modality and mission. In the same way, men and women in the Church are called to work together for their salvation and the world's; they are to fulfil themselves with and by each other in their striving toward the Third: God, who is the foundation of their unity. For, as Father Teilhard de Chardin so profoundly said, "Only one milieu brings together: God".[2] The Lord calls by name those who advance together toward Him and in Him: Simon, John, Andrew, but also Martha and Mary. The catholic unity of the Church is a dynamic unity in Christ, not of angels, but of human persons differentiated by sex, sanctified, "pneumatized" in the fullness of humanity.

WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is no theoretical development of the condition of women in the gospels unless we count the affirmation about the indissolubility of marriage. In relation to the Jewish custom of repudiation, this affirmation is an immense progress in women's favour. Women are nonetheless present in the earthly life of the Son of God

from the beginning to the very end, from Matthew's genealogy, where women are specially named and the Annunciation until Calvary and the first announcement of the resurrection given to the myrrh-bearing women. Women had profound and personal relationships with Jesus of Nazareth; Martha and Mary, Lazarus' sisters, the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, with whom the Lord had a "theological" conversation, Mary of Magdala of the "Easter garden" story. Jesus allowed women to touch him, in both the physical and spiritual meaning of the word. He was not afraid of being in contact with them even when one of them was a prostitute. He had compassion for their suffering and was moved by their insistent pleading, like in the case of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7:28). His disciples were surprised by this attitude which contrasted so sharply with rabbinical principles (Jn. 4:27 and Lk. 7:39). Such an attitude indicates a spiritual direction: any notion of women's ritual impurity is for ever abolished.

We must take note, though only in passing, of the Virgin Mary's place in the Scriptures and afterwards in Orthodox piety. The Church proclaims that God took flesh from a woman and the Church gives Mary the title of Theotokos, Mother of God. God did not use Mary like a passive instrument. He had the divine audacity to let the realization of his loving plan hang upon her fiat, upon the free acceptance of her faith. Mary participated in the work of the world's salvation not just in her body. She participated in her body because of her personal faith and obedience that opened her integrally and nuptially to the "Spirit of the Most High" who cast His shadow over her. The crowd cried out when Jesus went by, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked". He answered, not to lessen the role of his mother but

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to underline the personal and spiritual dimension of her motherhood: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk. 11:28). They were to keep it like Mary kept it (Lk. 2:19). In the Virgin, "more vulnerable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim", all women can feel honored. In the conscience of the Church, her image is not one of a fragile and passive femininity. She is the new Eve, the mother of true Life, the archetype of the fulfilled humanity, overflowing with the life-giving grace of the Spirit. Between Mary, between "the woman clothed in Light", of Revelation, and the Holy Spirit, spiritual intuition senses a mysterious correspondence that contemporary Orthodox theology has tried to make explicit.

FIGURES OF WOMAN: DISTORTED IMAGES OF WOMAN THROUGH HISTORY

The radiant image of the Virgin Mother has taken root and grown in the consciousness of the faithful throughout the centuries and has for women enlightened the darkest ages of so-called Christian societies. Paradoxically, however, the light of the Unique One has left her humiliated sisters in the Shadows.

> "Between the summit of humanity, the Virgin Mary 'more glorious than the Seraphim' whose veneration has risen very rapidly, and an incomplete and demonic feminine human-being, there does not seem to exist a middle position. A striking alienation has set itself up in history as a normal situation."[3]

In fact, in the East as well as the West, Church practice as it concerns women is often a compromise between the Gospel affirmation of the equal dignity in Christ of men and women and a persistent pagan mentality that says that women are inferior, incomplete (even going so far as to deny that they have an immortal soul) and demonic beings. Because of the desire they stir up, women are seen as upsetting the well-ordered society established by males who objectivize and condemn in them their own lust. The Gospel yeast nonetheless continues to raise the heavy dough of historical Christianity. All through the centuries, Christian women have been baptized, chrismated and invested with the fullness of the royal priesthood; they have confessed their faith in Christ, endured martyrdom, evangelized, prophesied and attained the heights of holiness in the life of consecrated virginity as well as in married life.[4]

Women played an unquestioned and important role in the diffusion of Jesus' message in the apostolic age. Despite the injunction of silence we hear in 1 Corinthians 14:36, whose meaning in the text is obscure as we have seen, Paul's letters show that women prayed and "prophesied" in the first Christian assemblies (1 Cor. 11:4). The apostle evoked examples of evangelists such as Aquila and his wife Priscilla, deaconesses like Phoebe and Julia (Rom. 16:1, 3 and 15) whose zeal he recognised and

praised. These allusions are not clear enough to allow us to determine exactly what the deaconesses did at a time when the organization of the Church was still in the developmental stage. The ministry of the deaconess was to survive and develop into the patristic age.

The Fathers of the Church were influenced by the cultural stereotypes of their time and reacted strongly against the depraved mores of a society that was only superficially evangelized. They were also marked by the rabbinical exegesis that laid on woman the prime responsibility for original sin. As a result, the Fathers have frequently shown themselves very stern towards the feminine sex. It is not difficult to gather together a long list of anti-feminist patristic statements. [5] But this severity is above all inspired by a pastoral concern and by the elevated spiritual ideal that makes monasticism appear to be the way par excellence of Christian perfection. The anti-feminist excesses are often the result of more or less heretical tendencies that have been influenced by Gnostic dualism. It is characteristic that the Fathers who represent a balanced theology and an authentically catholic thinking, like John Chrysostom, loudly proclaim the equality of women and men, even women's superiority in the order of holiness. This vision of equality did not prevent him, however, from railing against so-called feminine faults. St. Jerome is often very hard on women, but while acknowledging their intellectual gifts, he advised them to be modest so as not to run directly up against the sense of superiority that is natural to males. He wrote the following:

> "It accepted that women remain at home while men take care of the affairs of city. But in the various battles and trials that must be endured for the Church, the women — and not men — easily take the prize for courage, when it comes to doing battle and sustaining long and tiresome efforts".[6]

It is true that certain exhortations from Christian antiquity that exalt the monastic life also belittle the servitudes of married life and maternity.

In ascetic effort as well as in martyrdom, women of Christian antiquity proved that they were equal and sometimes superior to men when it came to the firmness of their faith. John Chrysostom recognized that grace "reverses the order of law as formulated by apostle Paul", and he advised husbands to follow the advice and example of wives who spiritually outrun them.

Unlike Thomas Aquinas and the medieval scholastic theology influenced by Aristotelian theories, the Fathers of the Eastern Church never attempted to supply rational grounds for the inferiority of women. They never question that inferiority, however, as an accepted fact in the social structures of their time.

The official doctrine of the Orthodox Church has never wavered on this question. This is true despite the latent temptation in certain monastic circles toward a Gnostic dualism in which woman is the figure of sin par excellence — and that means sins of the flesh. Although gnosticism has been condemned as a doctrine, it has nonetheless left traces in people's way of thinking. Paul Evdokimov wrote that "we sometimes get the impression that salvation is an affair only of males and that those who wish to be saved must above all be saved from women".[7]

Between the angel and the beast, between being a nun and a purely sexual object, it would appear that there are no other alternatives for women. Things are not as simple as that, however. By calling women to consecrated virginity, monasticism has also powerfully contributed to their affirmation as persons and to their liberation from social constraints. A nun escapes from the patriarchal guardianship of the family. She freely disposes of her body. The obedience to a call from On High frees her from biological and social determinism.

It is true that certain exhortations from Christian antiquity that exalt the monastic life also belittle the servitudes of married life and maternity. In this, they seem to foretell the most extreme demands of contemporary feminism, especially the refusal to have children.[8] In both cases, we see the danger of denying womanhood: on the one hand, there is an egalitarianism that levels all differences; on the other, there is a hidden pseudo-angelism that generates neuroses. We must repeat, however, that these tendencies are exaggerations of extremists who have fallen away from the measured and balanced approach that characterizes the ascetic art of the Fathers, an approach that does not aim at abolishing the multi-faceted richness of humanity but rather aims at integrating this richness in the divine sphere. By becoming a "spiritual mother" the nun does not kill, but sublimates by the Spirit, her maternal vocation.

If monasticism has greatly contributed to the recognition of women's status as free persons, the Church has also exalted married women as such, not only as mothers

but also as wives. We often hear of the apostle Paul's misogyny, but he is also the one who pointed to conjugal unity as a mystery, an Epiphany of the reciprocal love that unites Christ and the Church-humanity (Eph. 5:21-32). Marriage participates in this mystery and is called upon to reflect it. The wife is for the husband the icon of the Church that he must love as his own body. If women are urged to be submissive to their husbands, it is in the general framework of the law of love, sacrificial love that orders all Christian living. "You who fear Christ, submit yourselves to one another" (Eph 5:21). This is the commandment that reveals the meaning of the entire passage. The accent is not so much on the submissiveness of the women — that went without saying in Jewish and Greek societies — but on the reciprocity of respect and love that characterizes the new relationships in the kingdom of God. We must also add the exaltation by Paul of Christ the Servant (Phil. 2:5-8). The Spirit of Christ urges the believer to follow his example. The submission each to the other in conjugal relations here receives a radically new meaning. A submission of the husband to the wife is also implied:

> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife ..." (Eph. 5:31).
> "... the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season ..." (Cor. 7:4-5).

Last but not least, Paul taught the husband, as well as the wife, to discern in one another, beyond the weak and sinful creature, the divine image which marks them both and which shines through their infirmities: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ..." (Eph. 5:22 and 25).

The Church's pedagogy aims at forming women who, without weakness or affected delicacy, assume their condition of wife and mother while transcending such conditions in the radiant brilliance of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

On the basis of Paul's statement, the Church promoted a new image of women. The Church conferred on women, as well as on men, the dignity of being shining icons of a presence that goes beyond each woman but which manifests itself in her person.

Unfortunately, the practice of Christians has not always measured up to the greatness of this vision. Nevertheless, this ideal has always been proclaimed and transmitted by the profound and wonderful mystical poem that is the Orthodox rite of marriage. It has no parallel in Western Christian confessions.

The Church's pedagogy aims at forming women who, without weakness or affected delicacy, assume their condition of wife and mother while transcending such conditions in the radiant brilliance of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The traditional Orthodox ideal, being enlivened by an intense current of Marian piety, had been the inspiration of holy and fulfilled women, both courageous and humble. Orthodox hagiography as well as secular literature, especially the Russian novel from Dostoevsky through Tolstoy to Pasternak, stand witness to this fact. The "feminine" is present in the Orthodox Church and permeates the atmosphere of the liturgy itself as well as the liturgical assembly. As one contemporary Orthodox writer says,

> "In our churches, women feel not only tolerated but honoured. They are at home in the house of the heavenly Father. They come with their children carrying their babies in their arms. Their children bring to church their noise, their toys and sometimes their disorder." [9]

In this apparent disorder, that sometimes shocks strangers, the richness of life circulates, a life whose guardian is woman. In the words of Paul Evdokimov, human beings receive through their experience of the "maternal and feminine" the indestructible nostalgia of the heavenly Kingdom — well before meeting the priest or the bishop.

Without calling into question the hierarchal structure of the Church, Orthodox men and women feel this structure to be essentially a communion of prayer and love, not a pyramid of powers. For Orthodox believers, the Church is not a society with a patriarchal structure thought up by men and governed by and for them, a structure that is denounced by certain Western feminists. Despite a sometimes parasitical clericalism, "the Church of the Holy Spirit", as Fr. Nicholas Afanassieff called it, is filled and permeated by a mysterious feminine presence whose sign and personal archetype is the Theotokos. Is this to say that the Orthodox have nothing to receive from the Western women's movement, that we can ignore and neglect the questions that are being asked of the Churches today? Does this mean that we can answer them by referring to archaic cultural models, that we can be content to repeat the sayings of the Fathers without having their creative spirit? Should we not be attentive, as they were, to the "signs of the times" and to what the Spirit is saying to the

drawing taken from "women in the middle east", maoc perspectives

MODERN ORTHODOX THINKING ABOUT WOMEN

Paul Evdokimov (1901-1970), was the heir to the dynamism of Russian religious thinking and he put the intuitions of its thinkers back into the context of the Fathers' christocentric and trinitarian anthropology and theology.[10] In the domain of a theology about women, marriage and sexuality, Paul Evdokimov was especially responsible for opening windows and letting in some air where the atmosphere was sometimes hardly breathable. He gave new life to subjects that for too long people had been too silent or reticent about. As a married lay theologian, Evdokimov indignantly rejected a conception of womanhood that contained the clumsy definition of the goal of the marital union, a definition, moreover, that hangs on in the manuals of moral theology. According to this conception, going back through Thomas Aquinas to Augustine, women's function is reduced to nothing more than an organ of biological reproduction. In the words of the Scholastic saying taken in its literal meaning: Tota mulier in utero. Males need women only to assure physical descendants. Thomas Aquinas affirmed that "for all other works, a man is better off being helped by another man than by another woman".

Paul Evdokimov noted that if we start from this position, it is only a small step to affirm that "woman, except for a nun, is by nature inferior to man" and to contest her direct relation with God, a relation

Churches in each generation? Does not authentic faithfulness to the Fathers consist in building on the foundations that they laid, in exploring new roads that are but the extension of ancient roads paved by our patristic ancestors?

that only a man is supposed to have. Evdokimov opposed this crude and degrading notion with the intuition of "the mystery of woman". Throughout history, societies have formed or deformed feminine types. Nonetheless, women have kept in their inner depths the mystery and charisms of womanhood which St. Paul designated by the symbol of the "veil" (1 Cor.11). This mystery must be "unveiled" and explained in order to understand its destiny, a destiny that is coupled with man's. Having deciphered the Genesis stories, Evdokimov saw in them the original model of a consubstantiality between the complementary masculine and feminine principles. Eve is the flesh of Adam's flesh, the other who is just like him. Man and woman are thus called to be a single flesh in the diversity of persons. Sin broke up this unity by opposing a bad masculinity and a bad femininity; the tension thus created resulted in discord and hopeless struggle. But divine grace, in Christ, reconstituted the initial cell.

"The conjugal community stands as a prothetic figure of the Kingdom of God, a community of the masculine and of the feminine in their totality in God. The biological level becomes the sign of a spiritual level that transcends the biological. Humanity in its plenitude, whose womb is the Church, is only brought to fullness by joining the feminine and masculine principles." [11]

Going even farther, Evdokimov suggested a mysterious relationship, an analogy, on the one hand between the masculine principle and the Word who expresses, orders and structures and on the other between the feminine principle and the Spirit who incarnates, inspires and consoles. In Semitic languages, in particular in Hebrew, the word spirit, rouah, has two genders. It is sometimes used in the feminine. There is certainly no question of introducing a sexual differentiation into the Trinity and apophasisism, that is silent respect in the face of the divine mystery, must constantly correct the analogy.

In the words of the Scholastic saying taken in its literal meaning: Tota mulier in utero. Males need women only to assure physical descendants. Thomas Aquinas affirmed that "for all other works, a man is better off being helped by another man than by another woman".

Nonetheless, a spiritual intuition based on the scriptural revelation discerns what might correspond in God to the feminine aspect of the image of God in man.

In a text written just before his death, Paul Evdokimov spoke about "the hypostatic maternity" or "generating function of the Holy Spirit".[12] He based his statements on the fundamentally triadic character of the eastern Fathers' theology in which each Person of the Trinity is contemplated simultaneously in his relation to the two others. Evdokimov felt justified in saying that "the Father begets the Son with the participation of the presence of the Spirit". According to Evdokimov, the presence of the Spirit in the eternal nativity of the Word conditions his function in the economy of salvation. In the creed, Christ is "born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary". In the words of Fr. Bulgakov, taken up by Paul Evdokimov, the Spirit is "the breath of birth-giving and hypostatic maternity". The virginal maternity of the Mother of God is in a correlative sense "a figure of the Holy Spirit".

From these speculations, we may retain one intuition especially. We can see it better through the veil of symbols than we can in human conceptions. It is the intuition of a mysterious and ineffable correlation between the feminine as a way of being, as an ontological and constituent structure of humanity and something or rather someone in the superessential Divinity. God is not only Being but also openness and interpersonal tension.

"The Shekinah. The glory, the life, the Breath, which come forth from a God who is so full that he might crush man but from a God incarnate and crucified; they spring out from his voluntary emptying, his self-hollowing so that the other might be what constitutes the ultimate form of love." [13]

This love expresses itself in the most perfect way in creaturely existence through maternal love. Pervaded in her whole being, even in her flesh, by the Spirit "the Giver of Life" to whom Mary opened herself, she became the new and true Eve, the "Mother of all the living" because she is the mother of Him who is Life itself. Veiled and yet unveiled in the archetypal figure of the Mother of God, the divine mystery enlightens both the ultimate vocation of the Eternal Feminine, even in its most humble creaturely expression and the God-bearing destiny of all humanity according to the eternal divine plan. Poets too sometimes sense this mystery of faith: Louis Aragon wrote that "woman is the future of man".

WOMANHOOD, THE CARRIER OF THE FUTURE

"Woman is closer to the source of life than is man the technician and builder." In a moment of spiritual enlightenment, Paul Evdokimov adopted and deepened this statement of Nicholas Berdiaev. Carrying on Evdokimov's think-

ing, we may say that the distinctiveness of women belongs to two areas at the same time: the transmission and preservation of life and the relation with the other, with concrete others who are loved and accepted in their otherness. To be a woman means to aspire to fulfil oneself by welcoming the other, by bringing into the world "an other" life that has been allowed to grow inside oneself and which must be lovingly cared for. This is at the opposite end from solipsism which is the masculine temptation par excellence. The openness of being a woman is not without its ambiguities, however, since by it Eve was opened to the Serpent's suggestions. By her very openness, though, she was predisposed to become, in the words of Evdokimov, "the spiritual organ of human nature", to receive the divine Word and allow it to bear fruit within herself. In the name of the divine law, of the law from On High, the "little Antigone", as the symbol of feminine force and passion, has never ceased through all the centuries to defy and disturb the order, or the "established disorder", of the Creons who are the prudent and sceptical administrators of the earthly city.

The immense reservoir of cosmic and spiritual energies that men sense in women make them fear a throw-back to the primitive chaos, concerned above all as they are, by order and hierarchy. Fear is not always baseless, but the Spirit of God, the "chaste and luminous energy", according to Teilhard de Chardin, never ceases to hover over the original watery depths until the "woman robed in light" is formed in them, in the solar brilliance of the Christ-Bridegroom. As the carrier of the future, womanhood, obscurely or consciously, is striving toward "Him who is coming".

Holy womanhood is not a matter of empirical data in the fallen world, but faith and hope sense this holiness in Mary of Nazareth, the unique woman, the "Mother of God", from whom the Lamb of God condescended to take flesh and who, more intimately united to her Son than the seraphim, shares His love for the sinners even to the point of feeling co-responsible with Him for their salvation.

Along with the image of Christ, every woman carries potentially within her, with the image of Christ, the image of his mother. Purified and transformed by the fire of the Spirit, the deep, though sometimes wild and stifling, instinct that attaches women to life and to their children, changes into "universal motherhood", at once interiorized, spiritualized and open. This motherhood makes her compassionate toward all those who suffer, are hungry, in need, lost, are sinners. The masculine mind is at home in the world of ideas, though individual women also participate in this world; it runs the risk, however, of getting lost in the infinity of abstractions and in the desert of ideologies. The charism that is proper to women, without excluding an aptitude for intellectual activity, is to give life and to care for it. A monk of the Eastern Church has written,

> "Blessed are you who are receptive and welcome, you whose gift is not profits and production, ... but a keen felling and devoted care for what is living." [14]

TODAY'S QUESTIONS

These views touch an essential reality which is experientially felt by many women. They are, however, angrily denied by a certain kind of feminism which itself may already be outdated. Rethought and brought up to date, the Orthodox theo-anthropology could help the women's movement to keep from getting bogged down in an aggressive and wounding militancy instead of becoming conscious of the meaning of women's authentic human vocation. But once again we must not allow the heavenly vision to be an excuse for promoting a sort of sublimated sexism. It sometimes seems that the only purpose of a certain exaltation of "feminine charisms" in relation to Mariology is to justify the exclusion of women from real responsibilities in the Church and society. It seems to me that Evdokimov himself gave way to this temptation when he set the properly masculine gift of creation in the cultural area over against women's charism of birth-giving:

> "If it is intrinsic to men to act, it is intrinsic to women to be and this is the religious state par excellence. Men create science, philosophy, art ... Women are at the other end of all objectification, for women's strength is not in creation but in birth-giving." [15]

Do we not have here a very distinguished way of expressing the ancestral and naive conviction of the intellectual superiority of the masculine sex? It seems to me that the error in this way of thinking comes from an "inclination toward cerebral abstractions" which Evdokimov himself justly denounced as the masculine bent par excellence. In the place of concrete human persons, men and women, with their varied and rich talents and their subtle differences, we substitute concepts, even cultural stereotypes. We confuse the "feminine" or the idea that we have of it even though such an idea may be partly true, with persons in their concrete uni-complexity. From the biological, psychological, but also spiritual, point of view, every human person is in reality a composite being having either a masculine or feminine dominance which has been more or less accentuated, formed or deformed by education and cultural influences. Oliver Clement has written that "every human being, whether man or woman, is called to a certain virility in relation to his nature — we

think of the 'strong women' of the Bible — but also to a certain femininity in relation to God". We would add: and to his fellow creature. The distinction between cultural creation and birth-giving, though partially well-grounded, cannot be hardened into a radical opposition unless we intend to reduce birth-giving to a purely biological phenomenon and cultural creation to a simple fabrication or arrangement of objects. Is not the first, birth-giving, extended into education that is a creation? And the second, cultural creation, when authentic, does it not always come close to birth-giving in which the creator gives himself to the object he has created?

It is quite obvious that men and women have different ways of being in the world. They function according to very different styles: a difference composed of harmonies and subtle assonances. What we have here is a qualitative difference with no necessary and permanent relations to any particular domain; nothing is reserved to one or the other and these domains vary across cultures and eras. To limit more or less arbitrarily "the charisms of women" to the home or to what are called today "feminine" occupations, which generally mean carrying out the decisions made by others, is an anachronistic point of view and contradicted by the facts.

The richness of women is "a sometimes embarrassing plethora of resources",[16] which at times compels them to crucifying decisions, but this richness makes it possible for them to give birth and to create. Women can be writers or artists but also engineers, scientific researchers, company presidents, or political leaders: they do not carry on these professions any better or worse than men when we take into account the possibility of making mistakes which is part and parcel of human frailty. In carrying out these professions, women do not necessarily lose their femininity. They must not be excluded from this or that profession but rather from the temptation "to play the man", that is, to imitate the worst aspects of masculinity: self-centeredness, hardness, dominating spirit. Women's strength, though it seems close to the weakness that makes them vulnerable, is to get deeply and personally involved in whatever they undertake, but they are also capable of unlimited devotion.

Instead of playing dangerous and sterile games of competition, instead of mutually ignoring and denigrating each other, men and women should learn today how to collaborate in all cultural domains! Let women bring what can be considered to be their proper gifts: intuition, sympathy, attention to the other, a natural propensity to love and protect life. It would be unfair and vain to try to limit their choices in an authoritarian manner whereas the real question for us, men and women alike, is that we must become more and more aware of the ultimate choice:

> "... I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live ..." (Deut. 20:19).

The over-evaluation of women's work outside the home is often a hoax; that is a fact. Far from letting women grow and develop, their entry into the production cycle, under present-day conditions, opens them to the risk of being reduced to a double servitude. Nonetheless, for many women, working "outside the home" is a hard economic necessity or a way of acquiring a minimum of material and moral independence. For some it is an act of social solidarity, a specific vocation in which they develop and grow. But, unless one has special calling or unless living conditions are too inhuman, for most women (and sisters, I call on you to bear witness) nothing surpasses "the joy", "that a child is born into the world", a joy which is a foretaste of eternal beatitude (Jn. 16:21). It is a joy that is extended in the celebration of infancy, of the awakening to self-awareness that the mother has the vocation of watching over and caring for. The home "domestic

BIBLICAL SOURCES ON WOMEN

Stories of exceptional women in the Old Testament, useful for discussion groups:

Deborah - Judges 4:4-10.5
Ruth - Book of Ruth 1-4
Judith - Book of Judith 2:1-13, 4:8-15, 7-13, 6:21-30
Esther - Book of Esther 11-3, 4:1-17, 5-8
Susannah - Daniel

Jesus brings a change by relating to women in a completely new way:

The women disciples of Jesus - Luke 8:1-3
Mary and Martha - Luke 10:38-47, John 11-12:7
The women at Simon's house - Luke 7:36-50
The woman they wanted to stone - John 8:3-11
The Samaritan woman at the well - John 4:5-42
The women with the issue of blood - Luke 8:40-56
The raising of Jairus' daughter - John 20:11-18

Women in the early church

Lydia - Acts, 16:11-15, 18:1-4
Priscilla and Aquila - Acts, 18-21

No longer male nor female, but a new creation - Gal., 3:26-28

Notes

1. L. GIARD, "La Fabrique des Filles" (Manufacturing Girls), Esprit, June 1976, pp. 1108-23.
2. "Two magnets can stay indefinitely attached to each other: in their coming together, they slowly pass each other by ... Only one milieu brings things together: God." P. TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, quoted in H. de Lubac, L'Eternel Féminin: Etude sur un texte du Père Teilhard de Chardin (The Eternal Feminine: A study on a Text of Fr. Teilhard de Chardin), Paris, 1968, note 1 p.69.
3. P. EVDOKIMOV, Sacrement del'Amour (The Sacrament of Love), Paris 1962, p.19. Among the recent works that deal with Church anti-feminism, we can cite the following: J.M. Aubert, La Femme, antifeminisme et christianisme (Woman: Antifeminism and Christianity) and Les femmes dans l'Eglise (Women in the Church), Concilium, 111, 1976.
4. Among the canonized saints of the Orthodox Church, and they represent only the visible part of the iceberg of holiness, married women are relatively rare. Usually the married saints are empresses such as Helen the mother of the emperor Constantine or princesses such as the grand duchess Olga. We must not forget, however, the popular veneration in Russia for Juliana Lazarevskaya (+1604). She was a mother of numerous children who, for the love of others, renounced the monastic life that she was attracted to. See also E. Behr-Sigel, Prière et Sainteté dans l'Eglise Russe (Prayer and Holiness in the Russian Church), Bellefontaine, 1972, pp 109-13.
5. "Woman in the gate of hell" (Tertullian). "Every woman ought to be weighed down with shame at the thought that she is a woman." (Clement of Alexandria). These passages are quoted by P. EVDOKIMOV, Sacrement de l'Amour (The Sacrament of Love), p 19, St. John Chrysostom saw in women's beauty a terrible trap set by Satan, and he sharply criticized women's taste for makeup and clothes.
6. Letter 170, quoted by F. QUEERE, op. cit., p. 61.
7. P. EVDOKIMOV, Sacrement de l'Amour (The Sacrament of Love) p. 17.
8. "In truth, does a servant of God have the duty to have children? Are we so sure of our salvation that we can allow ourselves to be invaded by children? Are we going to accept thoses burdens odious to so many pagans who get rid of them by killing them in the womb? [Tertullian, Traité contre les secondes noces, 2, 1 (Essay Against Second Marriages)] Even St. John Chrysostom saw in the sorrows and worries that children bring a reason for opting for monastic celibacy (Traité de la virginité, 57).
9. M. ZERNOV, Women's Ministry in Church, Eastern Churches Review, 1 1975, p.38.
10. ALEXANDER BOUKHAREV (1822-1871) a great but little known Russian theologian, began a reflection on women and the Church, in the second half of the 19th century. He carried out his reflection in the perspective of a living and inventive appropriation of the ecclesial Tradition. Boukharev was both anchored in the soil of the Church's faith and open to contacts with the acids of modern Western culture. As such he was the first modern Orthodox theologian to dare to address the problems of human sexuality and marriage with boldness, depth and delicacy. He integrated sexuality and marriage into a vision of womanhood in the work of salvation. After Boukharev, Russian religious thinking moved away from the solid terrain of the biblical revelation where he had always set himslef and took the more adventuresome road that led to the sacralization of sexual eros, with Rozanov, or to the speculation about the eternal feminine in God with the sophiology of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) and his disciples Paul Florensky (1882-1943) and Serge Bulgakov (1871-1944). Theirs was of course an audacious adventure, not without its ambiguities and risks. Nonetheless, the serious study of this current of opinion remains to be undertaken after some too hasty and global condemnations.
11. P. EVDOKIMOV, La Nouveauté de l'Esprit (The Newness of the Spirit). Bellafontaine, 1977, p.251.
12. P. EVDOKIMOV, Panagion et Panagia, Bulletin de la Société Française d'Etudes Mariales, 1970, reprinted in La Nouveauté de l'Esprit (The Newness of the Spirit), pp.259-62.
13. O. CEMENT, Le Christ, terre des vivants (Christ: the Land of the Living), Spiritualité Orientale, Bellafontaine, 1976 pp.37-38.
14. A monk of the Eastern Church, Amour sans limites (Love Without Limits), p.96.
15. P. EVDOKIMOV, Sacrement de l'Amour (The Sacrament of Love), p.41.
16. F. QUERE, La Femme Avenire (The Future as Woman), p.122.
17. Ibid, p. 123.
18. H. DE LUBAC, op cit, p. 87.

chores" whose noble gratuity makes them similar to the service of the supreme Servant, the education of children, truly a work of creation, all of these will remain for us privileged moments of growth and fulfilment that some men are beginning to envy.

The high point of aggressive feminism, wounding for women and humanity, seems today to be on the decline. It is perhaps the role of Christian women to contribute and promote "a total feminism", a feminism that does not cut anything off but which "respects the likenesses and the differences".[17]

The ecclesial vision of the divine Tri-Unity, far from being an abstraction without any relation to real life, as some think, must be the guiding image of a new humanism or rather of a divino-humanism in which men and women mutually recognize and respect each other in their common divine vocation and in their differences. Let us hope that women can help men against themselves, against their deformed masculinity (which women carry in themselves too), and stop humanity at the edge of the abyss and the destruction of History. Perhaps the time has come, as such Christian thinkers as Soloviev, Berdiaev, Teilhard de Chardin felt, when, in the secret radiance of the transcendent mystery, men and women will be able to exercise in freedom "their complementary characters, in their finely shaded and diverse relationships of association, friendship and conjugal love. What history up till now has not seen, except in certain rare cases, could come about in the future through a collective refining for which women, the feminine as a spiritual virtue, would be the main workers".

There is no question, certainly, of making men effeminate any more than of turning women into viragos, but it may just be that we want to feminize human beings, in the most noble meaning of the word, to preserve and awaken in them a feminine attitude of effacement and of acceptance when confronted by mystery, the Mystery of God and the mystery of the neighbour, the mystery of the other that I cannot come to know except by opening myself to Him. For those who look at love through the archetypal image of the Mother of God, woman is the figure of love and her mission is to remind humanity that the law of love of every kind of love, is to open oneself to the universal. Love is fulfilled by accepting and welcoming the Third One: the child, the poor, the stranger, all images of Him who is himself, in person, the "Lord Love".

In this way, a new art of living could bloom, even if it were only on a few islands, like the first Christian communities or medieval monasteries. These communities would be places where being would have priority over having, where inner fulfilment would be more important than competing for power and where science and technology would serve life, not death.

From: Training for Transformation, by Ann Hope and Sally Timmel, Mambo Press: P.O. Box 779, Gweru, Zimbabwe, 1984.

Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, born in 1907 Strasbourg-Schiltigheim, is known as the "grand-mother of European Orthodoxy". The Reflection presented here first appeared in "Contacts 100" (1977) and was later included in her work "The Ministry of Women in the Church", published by Oakwood Publications, 616 Knob Hill Ave, Redondo Beach, California 90277. This edited chapter is reproduced with the kind permission of the Middle East Council of Churches magazine "MECC PERSPECTIVES" issue 9-10, 1991.

YOUTH TEAM

Ms Anu Talvivaara, from Finland, executive secretary. Anu has also replaced Elizabeth Salter in the editorial team for ECHOES.

Mr Peter Brock, from Australia, executive secretary.

Ms Donnalie Edwards, from Antigua and Barbuda, programme consultant.

Ms Judith Kocher, from Switzerland, administrative assistant. Will be joining the ECOS team as assistant to Ms Edna Orteza.

Ms Charlotte Ehrnberg, from Mexico, administrative assistant.

team photos by peter williams, wcc

WOMEN'S TEAM

Ms Stella Jungo, from Zimbabwe, administrative assistant.

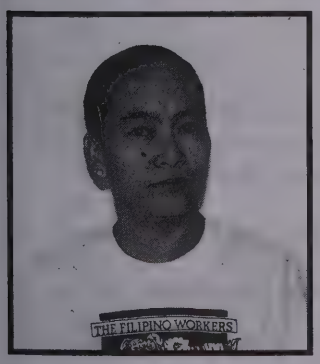
Ms Nicole Fischer, from Switzerland, programme consultant for the Mid-Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women.

Ms Aruna Gnanadason, from India, executive secretary.

Ms Alexandra Pomezny, from Switzerland, administrative assistant.

Ms Gillian Gallina, from the U.K., administrative assistant.

Ms Thembi Majola, from South Africa, executive secretary for Women in Rural Development.

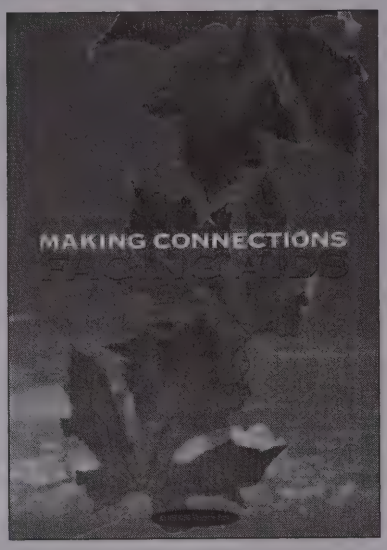


NEW ARRIVALS

Ms Edna Orteza, from the Philippines, has joined the ECOS team in January 1995 as executive secretary for Education for JPIC.

Mr Eugenio Poma, from Bolivia, is consultant in Unit III on the Indigenous People's Programme, working in the PCR team.

UNIT III PUBLICATIONS



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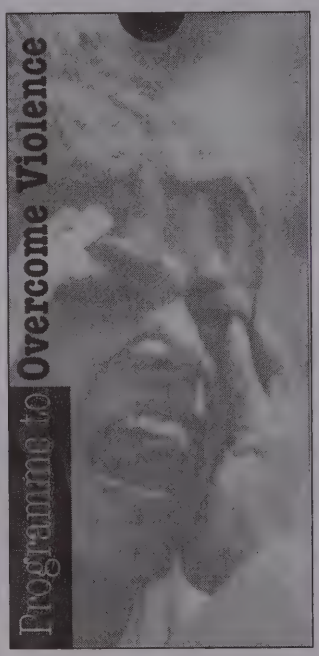
BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON EAST TIMOR

This publication is in the series of Background Information produced by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. It contains the report of the consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia in December 1994 on East Timor at Hong Kong and includes, amongst others, documents, information and the following articles:
-The Contemporary Roots of East Timorese Resistance and Prospects for Peace
-Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Development in East Timor
-Is the Integration of East Timor a Realization of Self-Determination of its People?
-Information of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) Executive Board about East Timor Problem
-selected statements and actions of the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia.



NEWLY LAUNCHED PROGRAMME !
PROGRAMME TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE

The Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches in Johannesburg in January 1994 resolved to establish a ***Programme to Overcome Violence*** *"with the purpose of challenging and transforming the global culture of violence in the directions of a culture of just peace".*

Available from Programme Unit III:
- a flier, briefly introducing the programme (english, french, spanish and german);
- an introduction to the Programme, as it is developing, including papers from a consultation in Corrymeela, Northern Ireland in 1994 (english only).

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PUBLICATIONS of INTEREST

OUR GLOBAL NEIGHBOURHOOD
THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Oxford University Press, UK, ISBN 0-19-827998-1.

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TOWARD AN ECONOMY OF CARE

by Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange

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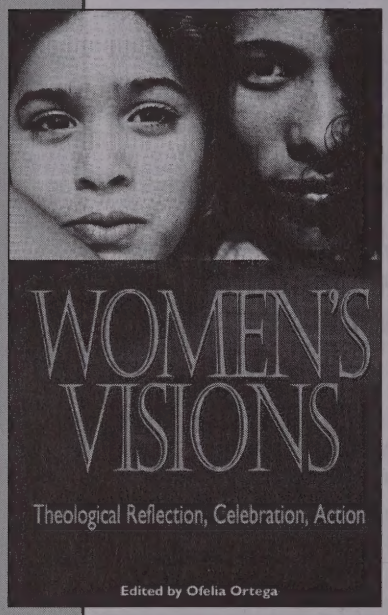
Order from WCC Publications: ISBN 2-8254-1138-8, 176pp., November 1994, Sfr.19.95, US$14.99, £9.95. Co-published with Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.



WOMEN'S VISIONS
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION, CELEBRATION, ACTION

edited by Ofelia Ortega

Over the past two decades, theological reflection by women has enriched the ecumenical encounter with a wealth of new perspectives and insights. The theology they are doing is as diverse as the contexts and traditions around the world in which women today live and struggle for survival, justice and wholeness. In this new collection of essays some of the most creative women theologians from different countries, cultures and confessions offer their assessment of the situation of women and the state of women's theology in every part of the world, as well as feminist perspectives on such central theological issues as ecclesiology, hermeneutics and homiletics.

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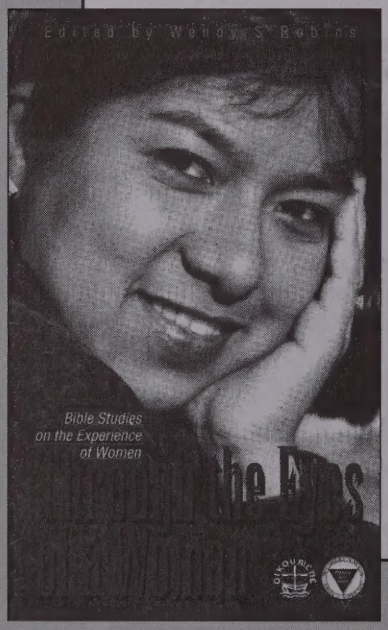

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BIBLE STUDIES ON THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN

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WCC PUBLICATIONS

IT'S LIKE HOLDING THE KEY TO YOUR OWN JAIL
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by Caroline Allison

This book provides the historical background to the situation before independence, the dimensions of South Africa's military presence and other aspects as they affected women, and includes moving testimonies by women who suffered the effects of war and repression.

Order from WCC Publications: ISBN 2-8254-0841-7, 82pp., 3rd printing, 1989, Sfr.8.90, US$5.95, £3.50 (also available in German).

CHURCHES IN THE WORLD OF NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND
THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

by Ninan Koshy

For churches and for their international ecumenical fellowship in the World Council of Churches, responding to political issues often creates tension, disagreement and misunderstanding. In this book, the author draws on his years of experience as director of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs to explore how political involvement is part of the church's mission and how the moral and ethical insights that emerge from the Bible and Christian tradition bear on the world of power politics. Among the issues he addresses are church-state relations, the links between church and national or ethnic identity, the possibilities of "ecumenical diplomacy" and the value and limitations of public statements by churches and church-related bodies. The book concludes with a look at some elements of the world situation after the cold war and what these imply for churches and the ecumenical movement.

Order from WCC Publications: ISBN 2-8254-1136-1, 130pp., 1994, Sfr.15.-, US$10.90, £6.95.

WOMEN, RELIGION AND SEXUALITY
STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF
RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS ON WOMEN

Jeanne Becher, editor

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ISBN 2-8254-0991-X, 278pp., 1990, Sfr25.-, US$17.50, £9.95.

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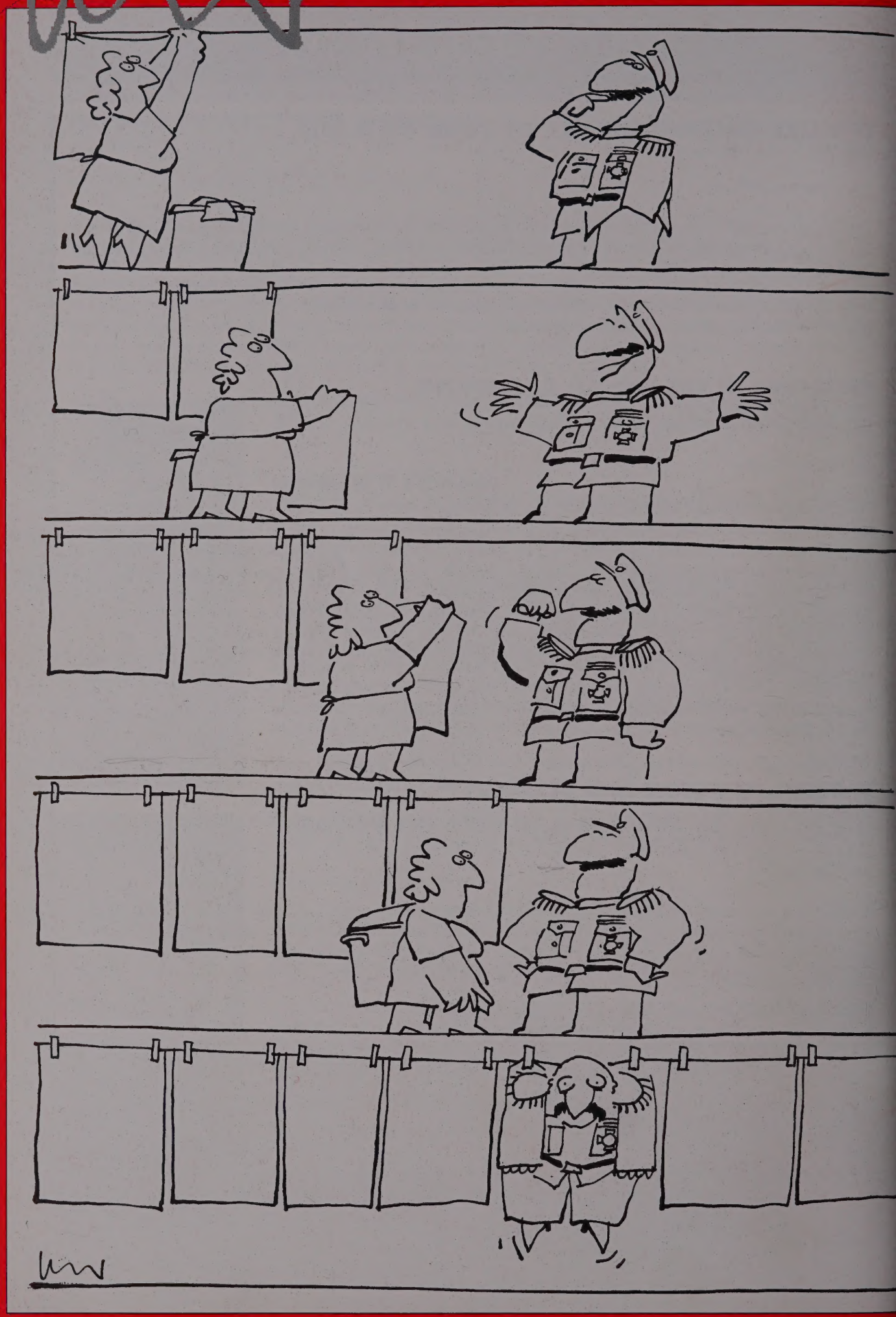
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